

Deindustrialization, Casinos, and the “Public Good”: A Case Study of Casino Windsor

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## Abstract

With deindustrialization, state and provincial governments in North America have increasingly legalized and expanded the availability of casinos, hoping to offset the impacts of manufacturing decline through the advancement of gambling commerce. In 1993, the Ontario provincial government legalized casinos and chose Windsor, Ontario—Canada’s automotive capital—to be the ‘pilot site’ for potential further casino expansion in Ontario. It was also the first resort casino constructed to cope with industrial decline. Purveyors of casino developments espouse benefits to the “public good” for host communities in terms of: 1) revenue generation, 2) economic diversification, and 3) ‘good jobs.’ Whether casinos do, in fact, ensure the “public good”—a goal legislatively mandated by the Ontario provincial government (The Government of Ontario 1993)—is not so clear, however. What casinos *do*—and *do not do*—for host communities in terms of economic growth remains debated. While some, particularly economists, point to the economic gains of casino development (e.g., increased municipal revenues, decreased unemployment), others point to how the gains of casino development are unequally distributed. More specifically, some suggest that the intended and supposed key beneficiaries—municipal interests and workers—of casino development may actually lose out. Drawing on the case of Casino Windsor, I ask: ***Has the casino’s development served the “public good”?***

While both sides of the debate acknowledge that *where* casino development occurs matters, how this is empirically demonstrated falls short. Indeed, both perspectives focus on outcome, one in aggregate (net gain) and the other highlighting that some benefit more than others (winners/losers). Based on 91 interviews with Windsor stakeholders (20)—from business, labour, and politics—as well as casino (28) and automotive (43) workers, the local news media, and descriptive statistics, this thesis does not simply focus on the outcome of casino development at a single moment, but instead considers its history in order to see where power lies and how the distribution of the “public good” becomes unequal. In doing so, I shed light on the power struggles between interest groups over the distribution of the ‘good’ and how political and economic forces shapes these struggles over time. These are the processes which determine *who got what* when a casino is used as a (re)development tool in a city heavily reliant on a single industry (an ‘auto town’) and experiencing economic decline. Unlike previous research, I unpack

the workings of power behind casino development. Indeed, only through knowing how power works can we challenge it.

Has Casino Windsor made good on its promises of revenue generation, economic diversification, and ‘good jobs’? Looking over nearly 30 years, from Windsor’s acquisition (1988-1994) to its hosting (1994-2015) of the casino, the answer is both yes and no. I find that many of the promised returns of casino development did not materialize as expected. The casino has created revenue for the city. Yet, the revenue the city ended up receiving was minimal relative to the initial aspirations. The casino has also diversified the economy in the sense that it created another large employer outside of the automotive industry. Yet, the casino has taken on the form of a ‘one-stop shop’ and is seen as taking away clientele from smaller service and hospitality businesses. In addition, the identified employee pool (i.e., former automotive workers) did not end up getting these ‘good jobs’ and the promised “auto wages” for casino workers never materialized. Job quality at Casino Windsor has also moved from ‘good’ to ‘not so good’ over time.

These findings speak to what casinos, as an increasingly used economic redevelopment strategy, mean for host communities when used on an international border and in attempting to cope with deindustrialization. This research also highlights the non-linear character of deindustrialization and how this affects whether and how promises of the “public good” are fulfilled. The case of Casino Windsor in Windsor, Ontario, depicts the challenges and intricacies that occur when a city, feeling under economic threat, attempts to ‘get ahead of the curve’ of deindustrialization and diversify into the service sector through a casino. More generally, this dissertation elucidates the numerous geographic and temporal considerations which colour whether casinos contribute to the “public good” in host communities and points to how the broader political and economic landscape matters in revitalizing deindustrializing cities. While casinos continue to be sold to communities experiencing economic decline, this dissertation problematizes that casinos are a ready answer. In Windsor, from *cars* to *cars and a casino* has equaled a growing reliance on an industry with just as much (or more) of a precarious future.

## Résumé

Les gouvernements provinciaux et étatiques nord-américains, poussés par la désindustrialisation et espérant en contrer les effets, ont légalisé et élargi l'accès aux casinos. En 1993, le gouvernement provincial ontarien légalisa les casinos et choisit Windsor — capitale canadienne de l'automobile — comme « site pilote » pour le développement éventuel de casinos en Ontario. Cet hôtel-casino fut également le premier bâtiment du type construit dans l'objectif de contrer les impacts de la désindustrialisation. Les fournisseurs de développements de casino en défendent les bienfaits en termes de : 1) génération de revenu, 2) diversification économique, et 3) création de « bons emplois ». Cependant, contrairement à ce que ces fournisseurs avancent, il n'est pas clair si les casinos assurent véritablement le « bien commun » — mandat légal imposé par le gouvernement provincial ontarien (gouvernement de l'Ontario 1993). Ce que les casinos font — et ne font pas — pour les communautés d'accueil en termes de croissance économique reste sujet à débats. Tandis que certains, plus particulièrement les économistes, mettent de l'avant les avantages économiques du développement de casinos, d'autres soulignent la distribution inégale de cesdits avantages. En effet, plusieurs laissent entendre que les bénéficiaires prévus et les bénéficiaires-clés de ces casinos, c'est-à-dire les intérêts municipaux et les travailleurs, seraient perdants dans l'histoire. En étudiant le cas du Casino Windsor, je tenterai de répondre à la question suivante : *le développement de casinos a-t-il servi le « bien commun » ?*

Si les partisans des deux côtés du débat s'entendent sur le fait que le lieu où l'on développe un casino importe, cela n'a toujours pas été démontré empiriquement. En effet, les deux points de vue ne s'intéressent principalement qu'au résultat ; l'un s'intéresse au revenu net généré et l'autre cherche à démontrer comment certains en bénéficieront plus que d'autres. Cette thèse repose sur 91 entrevues d'acteurs-clés du monde de l'entreprise, du travail, de l'automobile, du casino et de la politique de la ville de Windsor, sur une analyse détaillée des médias locaux, ainsi que sur des statistiques descriptives. Elle ne s'intéresse pas uniquement aux conséquences du développement de casinos à un moment précis, mais aussi à son histoire afin de mieux comprendre où réside le pouvoir et comment la distribution du « bien commun » devient inégalitaire. Ainsi, je mets en lumière les luttes de pouvoir entre les différents groupes d'intérêts pour la distribution de ce « bien » et comment les forces politiques et économiques façonnent ces



conflits dans le temps. Il s'agit des processus déterminant «qui a eu quoi» lorsqu'un casino est utilisé comme un outil de (re) développement par une ville dépendant fortement d'un seul type d'industrie (l'industrie automobile) et connaissant un déclin économique. Ma recherche se distingue des études précédentes, car, au contraire de ces dernières, elle décortique les mécanismes réels du pouvoir derrière le développement de casinos. C'est en comprenant comment fonctionne le pouvoir qu'on peut véritablement le remettre en question.

Le Casino Windsor a-t-il tenu sa promesse de générer du revenu, de diversifier l'économie et de créer de « bons emplois » ? Lorsqu'on étudie l'histoire du casino sur environ trois décennies, soit de son acquisition par la ville de Windsor (1988-1994) jusqu'à son ouverture et sa mise en fonction (1994-2015), la réponse à cette question est oui et non. J'ai découvert que plusieurs bénéfices promis par le développement du casino ne se sont jamais véritablement matérialisés. Le casino a, en effet, généré des revenus pour la ville, mais ces derniers furent minimes comparativement à ce qui était initialement prévu. Le casino a diversifié l'économie car il a créé un autre grand bassin d'emplois en dehors de l'industrie automobile. Cependant, le casino a pris la forme d'un « guichet unique » et a accaparé la clientèle de plus petites entreprises hôtelières et de petits fournisseurs de services. De plus, les employés potentiels, c'est-à-dire les anciens travailleurs de l'industrie automobile, n'ont, au final, jamais eu les « bons emplois » leur ayant été promis et les « salaires automobiles » pour les travailleurs du casino ne se sont jamais matérialisés. La qualité des emplois au Casino Windsor s'est détériorée avec le temps.

Ces résultats mettent en lumière ce que les casinos, en tant que stratégie de redéveloppement, signifient pour les communautés d'accueil lorsqu'ils sont implantés sur une frontière internationale et utilisés pour affronter la désindustrialisation. La présente recherche souligne le caractère non linéaire de la désindustrialisation et comment cela affecte comment et si le « bien commun » est servi. Le cas du Casino Windsor, Ontario, démontre les enjeux survenant lorsqu'une ville menacée économiquement tente de « prendre le dessus » sur la désindustrialisation et de se diversifier dans le secteur des services par l'entremise d'un casino. De manière plus générale, cette dissertation explique les considérations spécifiques au contexte qui détermine si les casinos contribuent au « bien commun » dans les communautés d'accueil et souligne comment le paysage politique et économique importe lorsqu'il s'agit de revitaliser des

viles désindustrialisées. Alors que les casinos continuent d'être vendus aux communautés connaissant un déclin économique, cette dissertation problématise les casinos en termes de « réponse toute faite ». À Windsor, le passage de « *l'automobile* » à « *l'automobile et le casino* » équivaut à une dépendance croissante à une industrie ayant un avenir tout aussi (voir plus) précaire.

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## Introduction

With deindustrialization, provincial governments in Canada as well as state governments in the United States have increasingly legalized and expanded the availability of casinos, hoping to offset the impacts of manufacturing decline through the advancement of gambling commerce. In doing so, the long-standing heavy reliance on manufacturing in many locales has shifted, with casinos—in particular, resort casinos, which provide amenities and entertainment beyond gambling—increasingly promoted as a means of economic development (McCarthy 2002; Ryan 2012). This dissertation examines the case of Casino Windsor,<sup>1</sup> located in Windsor, Ontario—Canada’s automotive capital—which was the first resort casino outside of Atlantic City and Las Vegas. Casino Windsor also represents the first case of a resort casino being used to cope with industrial decline (real or anticipated). The struggle of the automotive industry in Windsor in tandem with Windsor acquiring (1988-1994) and hosting (1994-2015)<sup>2</sup> Casino Windsor provides a case to examine the public policy of using casinos as a redevelopment strategy amidst industrial decline.

In the early 1990s, Ontario was in the throes of a deep recession that especially impacted the automotive industry in Windsor. Moreover, the impending signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was predicted to have deleterious effects on Windsor’s automotive jobs, the economic backbone of the city. The looming free trade agreement and Windsor’s heavy reliance on the automotive industry for ‘good jobs’ (read: decent wages, benefits, and job security)<sup>3</sup> created a deep sense of fear in Windsor. Looking across the river at the ruin of Detroit,<sup>4</sup> a similar fate seemed to be fast approaching for Windsor and its automotive industry in the early 1990s.

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<sup>1</sup> Casino Windsor was rebranded as Caesars Windsor in 2008. For simplicity, I refer to the casino in Windsor as Casino Windsor throughout this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> Casino Windsor continues to be in operation. The year 2015 merely indicates the time frame covered in this dissertation.

<sup>3</sup> Unions, like the Canadian Auto Workers, have been successful in decommodifying the compensation of automotive workers in Canada, an industry which has been primarily concentrated in southwestern Ontario. Wages in automotive assembly are higher than the average wage in manufacturing and the broader economy. For instance, in 2013, automotive assembly workers in Canada made approximately \$34 an hour (Irvine 2014).

<sup>4</sup> In Detroit, the ‘rusting of the rust belt’ began in the 1950s, prior to the much-cited shocks of the 1970s oil crisis, the ‘race to the bottom’ of globalized labour, and the influx of car and steel imports (Sugrue 1999). While the forces of global capitalism have worked to further these trends, the state-corporate strategy of relocating manufacturing plants outside of inner cities affected Detroit and its population much earlier (Zukin 1993). As investment and employment emptied out of Detroit, the population has steadily declined since 1950, from approximately 1.8 million

With the threat of losing ‘good jobs’ in the automotive industry, Windsor began looking to diversify its economy. In 1993, the same year NAFTA was signed, the Ontario government passed the Ontario Casino Corporation Act, allowing for the establishment of casinos in Ontario. It chose Windsor to host Ontario’s first casino, Casino Windsor. Casino Windsor was construed as a means of diversifying Windsor’s economy. The Ontario government’s two main justifications for the creation of casinos were: (1) the enhancement of the economic development of certain regions of the province and (2) the generation of revenues for the province (The Government of Ontario 1993). The legislation also included the qualification that such developments be “*undertaken for the public good*” (The Government of Ontario 1993). The “public good,” however, remains undefined in the legislation.

What constitutes the “public good” (and not) and how casinos will contribute to the ‘good’ (and bad) at the host community level is, however, considered in a trove of literature on casino development and, I find, in turn, variably mobilized in the Windsor case. A considerable swath of scholarship on casino development emphasizes the known negative social impacts to the “public good.” These negative social impacts (i.e., problem gambling, crime, etc.) tend to be mainly incurred by the host community and are the primary reasons communities resist casino adoption. Despite these risks and the known negative consequences to the social “public good,” some communities, such as that of Windsor, Ontario, are still persuaded to adopt a casino. In these instances, promises of casinos contributing to the economic “public good” of host communities seem to trump the social deterrents, persuading host communities to *take the gamble* of hosting a casino.

Casino developments are largely promoted as a benefit to the economic “public good” for host communities in terms of: 1) revenue generation (i.e., tax and mitigation payments), 2) economic diversification, and 3) ‘good jobs.’<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in Windsor, Ontario, as I show in this dissertation, provincial and municipal actors relied heavily on such justifications in order to

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to approximately 673,000 people in 2016. This is a decline of more than 60 percent. Detroit has moved from being the 4<sup>th</sup> largest US city at the end of the 1940s to 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2016.

<sup>5</sup> While what a ‘good job’ means is dependent on the context and the relative economic position of the workforce being addressed, policymakers have readily characterized casino employment as providing ‘good jobs’ for low-skilled workers. This equals good wages (compared to other low-skilled service and hospitality jobs), the ability to make tips, and relative job security (i.e., working for a large employer). When looking across North America, casino employment is highly unionized compared to the broader service sector. When unionized—as there is a higher likelihood of unionization in a casino—casino jobs can equal ‘good jobs’ (i.e., higher wages, benefits, and job security).

legitimize the introduction of a casino. Whether casinos do, in fact, ensure the economic “public good,” is not so clear, however. What casinos *do*—and *do not do*—for host communities in terms of economic growth remains debated. While some, particularly economists, point to the economic gains of casino development—e.g., increased municipal revenues, decreased unemployment—others point to how the gains of casino development are unequally distributed. More specifically, some suggest that the intended and supposed key beneficiaries—that is, municipal interests and workers—of casino development actually may lose out. In this dissertation, drawing on the case of Casino Windsor, I ask: ***Has the casino’s development served the “public good”?***

In what follows, I explain the use of casinos as a tool to cope with deindustrialization. I then lay out the debate over whether casinos contribute to the “public good” of host communities. While both sides acknowledge that *where* casino development occurs matters, how this is empirically demonstrated falls short. Indeed, both perspectives focus on outcome, one in aggregate (net gain) and the other highlighting that some benefit more than others (winners/losers). I then outline how this dissertation furthers our understanding of whether casinos contribute to the “public good.” Examining the lobbying efforts surrounding casino legalization and economic development in Ontario and Windsor (1988-1994) to Windsor’s eventual hosting of the casino (1994-2015), this thesis does not simply focus on the outcome of casino development at a single moment, but instead considers its history in order to see where power lies and how the distribution of the “public good” becomes unequal. In doing so, I shed light on the power struggles between interest groups over the distribution of the ‘good’ and how political and economic forces shape these struggles which play out in space and over time. These are the processes which determine *who got what* when a casino is used as a (re)development tool in a city heavily reliant on a single industry (an ‘auto town’) and experiencing economic decline. Unlike previous research, I unpack the workings of power behind casino development. Indeed, we can only challenge power by understanding the processes behind power.

### *Deindustrialization and Casino Development*

Deindustrialization—a process which is social and political as well as economic—is disruptive and painful for many communities across North America (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Cowie and Heathcott 2003; High 2013). Deindustrialization involves the loss of industrial



activity and employment in an economy or region. Several mechanisms drive deindustrialization and the ensuing decline of low-skilled manufacturing work in advanced capitalist countries: skill-biased technological change (i.e., automation) (Pryor and Schaffer 1999), the increasing demand for services (Kollmeyer 2009), globalization (i.e., transport/ communication) (Brown, Eichengreen, and Reich 2010), and regional integration (i.e., capital and labour mobility) (Beckfield 2006). As a result of deindustrialization, there have been dramatic losses in low-skilled manufacturing work, which was typically highly unionized and well-compensated relative to other low-skilled sectors (i.e., service and hospitality). Such ‘good jobs’ have largely disappeared and the labour market has become increasingly segmented between high and low-skilled workers in terms of compensation received (Brown, Eichengreen, and Reich 2010).

How the process of deindustrialization proceeds, however, is by no means based on the free market’s ‘invisible hand’; rather, deindustrialization unfolds in a contested political arena, where the interests of politicians, corporations, business owners, and workers collide (McKee 2008). With the collapse of manufacturing in many cities, casinos have been increasingly viewed as a means to transition cities from ‘industrial to ‘postindustrial’ economies based on low-skilled work—in the case of Windsor, from *cars to casinos* (DiGaetano and Lawless 1999; McCarthy 2002; Ryan 2012; Wacker 2006). Indeed, economic downturns or recessions make the adoption of casinos more likely.<sup>6</sup> Casino ‘campaigns’ from their purveyors typically emphasize anticipated gains in terms of augmenting tax revenues (thus offsetting any need for tax increases), stimulating tourism, and creating jobs (Dombrink and Thompson 1990; Prum and Bybee 1999). The promises of casinos have proven compelling with a resulting surge in casino development across Canada and the US since the early 1990s.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, Richard (2010) finds that unemployment rates are positively associated with national government decisions to legalize casinos.

<sup>7</sup> In the US, until the late 1980s, casino gambling existed only in Nevada and New Jersey. In 1988, President Reagan signed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act while riverboat gambling spread in states along the Mississippi River basin (with Iowa first to legalize) beginning in the early 1990s (Truitt 1996). By 2014, approximately 470 Native American casinos existed across the US. In 1996, Michigan was the first state outside of Nevada and New Jersey to develop land-based resort-style commercial casinos (i.e., casinos which are not on Native land and are founded and run by private companies). By 2014, approximately 510 commercial casinos were operating around the US (Statista 2014). By 2014, 22 states and two US territories had legalized commercial casinos. In Canada, 15 Native casinos were in operation in five provinces by 2014 (Belanger 2014). In 1989, Canada’s first commercial casino opened in Winnipeg, followed by Montreal in 1993. There are approximately 68 casinos in seven of the 10 provinces in Canada (Chang, Lai, and Wang 2010).

Policymakers continue to promote the development of casinos under the pretext that they will help cope with deindustrialization. Despite promises of revenues for municipalities and employment for their citizens, casinos are generally understood to come with some social costs, particularly that of problem gambling (Room, Turner, and Ialominteanu 1999).<sup>8</sup> Much of the opposition in potential host communities is based on this presumed cost (Gross 1998; Sallaz 2009). A major challenge for governments looking to develop casinos as a revenue source has been to overcome such resistance (Klassen and Cosgrave 2009). Accordingly, policymakers often stress how casinos will contribute to the “public good” of host communities through revenue generation, economic diversification, and employment. However, what casinos *do*—and *do not do*—for host communities in terms of economic growth remains debated.

*Casino Development and Economic Growth: What Casinos ‘Do’ and ‘Who’ Casinos Do It For*

When examining whether casinos contribute to the “public good” based on economic indicators, the question is whether the *economy* will benefit from casino development (Chang, Lai, and Wang 2010; Horvath and Paap 2012; Rephann et al. 1997; Walker 2007). This perspective—which is heavily informed by economists—suggests that casinos do in fact make good on the economic promises of the “public good” (i.e., revenue generation, economic diversification, and employment). These economic arguments are what those with interests in developing casinos largely mobilize when campaigning to convince communities that hosting a casino is in their interest.

In contrast, another body of work—which scholars from urban geography, sociology, and political science heavily inform—counters the assumption that there is a common, collective, or “public” benefit from casinos. Instead, this literature suggests that the benefits from casino development are unequally distributed and that, for ‘the public,’ the costs outweigh the benefits. These scholars argue that states/provinces and corporations overwhelmingly benefit while casinos transfer wealth out of host communities and offer precarious ‘service class’ employment (Brenner and Theodore 2007; Calvano and Andersson 2010; Chambers 2011; Felsenstein, Littlepage, and Klacik 1999; Henriksson 1996; Klassen and Cosgrave 2009; Mele 2011; Peck and Tickell 2001). Indeed, some warn of casinos predominately incurring losses for their

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<sup>8</sup> The effects of casinos on problem gambling are well-documented, revealing that there is a relationship between the prevalence of problem gambling and proximity to a casino (Volberg and Wray 2007; Shaffer, LaBrie, and LaPlante 2004; Welt et al. 2007).

proposed beneficiaries in host communities—that is, municipal interests and workers—in terms of economic diversification and job quality.

### *What Casinos ‘Do’*

A literature which economists heavily inform emphasizes the positive economic gains of casino development for host communities. This literature, measuring the ‘good’ based on largely macro-economic indicators, suggests that casinos largely do yield positive economic growth. For host communities, this is argued to manifest in: municipal revenue generation,<sup>9</sup> recapturing gambling dollars,<sup>10</sup> reducing unemployment, bringing in tourist dollars, increasing wages, and an increase in consumer options as more goods and services become available (Chang, Lai, and Wang 2010; Furlong 1998; Horvath and Paap 2012; Moufakkir 2002; Rephann et al. 1997; Richard 2010). Some further contend that casino development also contributes to investment in construction (i.e., construction of the casino and upgrades in infrastructure around the casino), increases in labour immigration, and a reduction in the private sector tax burden (Walker 2013). In addition, economists primarily argue that the generation of export (or non-local) dollars determines whether casinos grow local economies.<sup>11</sup> Casinos located on state/provincial or international borders foster a greater likelihood of procuring these dollars. Overall, economists generally contend that casinos do result in an increase to the “public good” for host communities through: a) increased revenues (i.e., tax generation and mitigation payments), b) economic diversification, and c) employment.

Due to the taxes and fees applied to casinos, casinos offer the potential of economic growth for host communities by contributing to municipal revenues (Anderson 2005; Madhusudhan 1996). Few studies, however, have empirically addressed whether casinos do, in

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<sup>9</sup> Casinos generate tax for federal, provincial, and municipal governments. The direct taxes are property, federal/provincial income, and construction sales and use taxes (which all industries pay) as well as gaming taxes which are incurred only by the gaming industry. These gaming taxes, which are the largest taxes paid by the industry, are mostly directed to provincial and municipal governments (Andersen 1996).

<sup>10</sup> The loss of dollars to out-of-state casinos is sometimes called ‘fiscal leakage.’ Casino development is used to bring back local patrons, who are taking their gaming dollars outside the region, to the local casino. Indeed, this strategy is a form of import substitution (Walker 2007).

<sup>11</sup> If residents of the host community are the main patrons, the casino will merely involve the circulation of dollars among locals (Li, Gui, and Siu 2009). Walker (2013) and Walker and Jackson (1998) challenge the importance placed on “export” dollars in evaluating whether a casino is viewed as successful. Such arguments are mercantilist views on trade. Nonetheless, despite this criticism, the capturing of these export dollars is the primary driver of casino development as an economic development strategy for governments (state/provincial and local).

fact, result in municipal revenue gains (Barrow 2015).<sup>12</sup> For instance, Clynch, Feig, and Kaatz (2006) examine the impact of casino gambling on municipal revenues in Mississippi municipalities that host one or more casinos. They reaffirm previous observations that a “scholarly literature that directly addresses local government casino gaming tax revenue is nonexistent in scholarly books and journals of public finance and public administration” (82). Clynch, Feig, and Kaatz find that casinos do have a positive effect on municipal revenues while offering a steady stream of revenue whereby most jurisdictions continue to see increases from year to year. In addition, Tyrrell and Johnston (2009) find that two tribal casinos in Connecticut had a positive impact on total revenues in their host municipalities. Moufakkir (2002), examining Detroit, found that the casinos had a positive net economic impact in Detroit<sup>13</sup> and brought more dollars into municipal and state coffers. Moufakkir (2002) also suggests that the casinos brought in non-local casino visitors who contributed \$165 million to the local economy. Furthermore, Detroit casinos were effective in keeping gambling dollars in-state. Moufakkir (2002) finds that in 2000, \$73 million in gaming revenues remained in Detroit that would have otherwise been spent at Casino Windsor.<sup>14</sup>

Overall, *how much* a municipality benefits from hosting a casino in terms of revenue generation is based on the proportion of gaming revenues a municipality receives (which is negotiated between municipal, state, and corporate interests) relative to the increased ‘costs’ resulting from hosting a casino (i.e., policing, crime, services). Despite few studies actually addressing whether or not casinos result in net municipal revenue gains, the studies which have been conducted suggest a positive impact supporting casino purveyor claims that casinos contribute to the “public good” of host communities.

Concerning the impact of casinos on diversification in host communities, many studies have found that casinos have positive ‘spillover’ effects to other sectors of the economy (i.e.,

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<sup>12</sup> At the state/provincial level, Walker (2013) also questions the assumption of policymakers and some economists that casinos will result in an increase in state revenues. Walker (2013), based on US data, shows that casinos, on net, have a slight negative or no effect on state tax revenues. Indeed, this suggests that the assumption of increased tax revenues as a primary benefit of casinos is “less of a certainty than is suggested in much of the public debate or literature” (Walker 2013: 85).

<sup>13</sup> To assess the economic impact of Detroit casinos, Moufakkir (2002) accounts for tourism activity, gambling spending based on non-local patrons, gambling spending capture rates (i.e., dollars which would have been spent at Casino Windsor), crime, and bankruptcy filings.

<sup>14</sup> It must be noted, however, that this study examines data approximately one year after the three Detroit casinos opened between 1999-2000. As a result, these findings may very well reflect the “boom” resulting from the initial novelty of the casinos.

retail, food and beverage, entertainment, etc.). Rephann et al.'s (1997) US study finds that casinos can be an effective development strategy, suggesting that the benefits of casinos reach down through other sectors of the economy. He contends that these secondary impacts create work for many domestic supplier industries which then diffuses throughout the economy. Li, Gui, and Siu (2009) also find that casinos spur positive economic outcomes in host communities as casinos bring in foreign and domestic investments, which result in positive spillover effects in the local economy and in related sectors. Casinos, they say, can be a long-term strategy with continuing market expansion and positive spillover effects if diversification within the casino (i.e., convention centers, entertainment) is pursued (Li, Gui and Siu 2009).

Related to diversification, some scholars also consider casinos *a good* for consumers in terms of lowering entertainment costs in the area. Walker (2007) argues that casinos represent a good in local markets since they create competition in the entertainment industry. Competition is said to pressure prices downward and increase consumer surplus and options. Walker suggests that such benefits go unmeasured and are ignored by detractors of casinos. In addition, satisfying consumer demand results in increased consumer spending which creates new jobs and increases total economic output (Walker 2007).

Scholars also suggest that casinos have a positive effect on an area's unemployment and wages. For instance, Garrett (2004) finds employment growth in US counties with a casino compared to counties with no casino. Monchuk (2007) also finds casinos to have a positive effect on employment while decreasing the unemployment rate. Cotti (2009) suggests that casino introduction increases aggregate employment and has positive wage effects in US host counties relative to US counties without a casino.<sup>15</sup> Moufakkir (2002) also found that three Detroit casinos created over 7,500 direct jobs (i.e., at the casinos) and over 4,000 indirect jobs.

There are, however, a few who add the qualifier of 'short-term' to casino development and the prospect of economic growth. For instance, while casinos may cause positive growth effects through employment and tax revenues, these effects do not necessarily last (Walker and Jackson 2007). For instance, Humphreys and Marchand (2013), examining Canada, find that the opening of a new casino directly doubles the employment and earnings of the local gambling

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<sup>15</sup> Gerstein, Volberg, Harwood, Christiansen, et al. (1999), however, find that casinos have no significant per-capita income effect. Hunter (2010) finds that casino employment effects—defined as employment growth—were only positive and significant for new casinos. New was defined as up to four years after opening.

industry within five years. This growth, however, does not appear to continue beyond this period, which leads Humphreys and Marchand to question the endurance of growth as a result of casinos. What influences longevity remains underexplored within the research. Undoubtedly, one could hypothesize that whether growth occurs is dependent on a range of conditions such as the characteristics of the local and surrounding labour market, the type of casino being built, the sort of mitigation/host community fees and taxes applied to the casino and its distribution, the casino gaming market (i.e., how many casinos exist in an area), and the respective timeline under investigation.

### *'Who' Casinos Do It For?*

A second body of work problematizes the 'macro' perspective of economic gains, questioning *who* benefits from casinos. These scholars—anchored principally in the disciplines of urban geography, sociology, and political science—have argued that the benefits of casino development are not equally distributed and elevate some interests over others. Unlike the previous perspective, which highlights the additional revenues generated for state/provincial and municipal coffers, this take on casino development suggests that casinos equal a transfer of dollars and wealth out of host communities.

For instance, Calvano and Andersson (2010) examine casino legalization in Philadelphia and the conflict that was created between the community versus the gaming industry, investors, and real estate interests. They argue that the Philadelphia case represents government and corporate elites extracting value from already low-income and/or downwardly mobile communities and citizens (see also Bol, Lancee, and Steijn 2014; Chambers 2011; Schüll 2012). Indeed, some characterize casinos as a regressive tax, which transfers wealth away from already struggling local economies, while the majority of revenue fills the coffers of cash hungry states/provinces (Klassen and Cosgrave 2009; Reith 2007; Ryan 2012).<sup>16</sup> For instance, Teske and Sur's (1991) examination of Atlantic City juxtaposes the extravagant casinos with the nearby

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<sup>16</sup>For instance, Schull (2012) comments that, in public discussions, it is common to hear that the purveyors of commercial gambling and governments have become 'addicted' to gambling revenue. With the fixation on preserving and increasing gambling revenue, gambling organizations tend to acquire a worldview and actions mirroring those of an addicted individual. As Schull (2012: 296) quotes US representatives: "The biggest addict turns out to be the state government that becomes dependent on [gambling revenue],' said a senator from South Dakota. [...] 'they are looking for a quick fix to long-term problems. They start chasing their losses just like the addict does. They [states] suspend their own sense of reality.'"

urban slums, highlighting the inequitable redistribution of casino development's economic rewards (see also Hannigan 2007). In essence, critical of the actual wealth produced for host communities, some scholars frame casino development as a state-down initiative benefiting state/provincial and corporate interests (Beckert and Lutter 2012; Chambers 2011; Henriksson 1996; Taft 2016; Volberg and Wray 2007).

Relatedly, casinos are framed as contributing to economic inequality. For instance, based on a case study of Chester, Pennsylvania, Mele (2011) suggests that casinos represent a form of neoliberal development that contributes to the maldistribution of resources and income inequality. Brenner and Theodore (2002) also suggest that casino development is a form of 'roll-out' neoliberalism which is intended to release short-term bursts of economic growth to help fill state/provincial coffers (without raising income tax) while imposing many economic and social costs on host communities.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, some argue that this value extraction is not only economic, but social, as casinos are said to decrease the social capital—measured as trust, civic, volunteerism, group participation, giving, and meeting obligations of family and friends—within host communities (Griswold and Nichols 2006).

In contrast to arguments that casinos contribute to economic diversification in host communities, this body of scholarship suggests that casinos result in lost investment opportunities for host communities. For instance, Mele (2011) argues that casinos isolate cities from other forms of investment while representing one facet of states'/provinces' aggressive push to attract private capital. In addition, in contrast to diversifying economies, casinos are suggested to result in the 'cannibalization' of other local service and hospitality businesses (Henriksson 1996) and result in local economies becoming overly reliant on competition for localized 'leisure' dollars (Chambers 2011; Peck and Tickell 2001; Theodore and Brenner 2007).<sup>18</sup> These scholars are critical of this sort of competition between local economies for localized dollars, which results in municipalities and states/provinces having little choice but to also develop their own casinos (Felsenstein, Littlepage, and Klacik 1999; Peck and Tickell 2001).

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<sup>17</sup> Brenner and Theodore (2002) argue that casino development is a later phase of neoliberalism, emerging from three decades: the 1970s characterized by a relatively abstract economic doctrine; the 1980s characterized by dismantling or "rolling back" established Keynesian welfarist arrangements; and the 1990s characterized by the "rolling-out" of neoliberal development schemes.

<sup>18</sup> Politicians on bordering states have described the anxiety surrounding casino development as an "arms race" (Schull 2012: 300). In this context, export surplus is necessarily based on a nearby locale's deficit.

Some suggest that casinos as a revitalization scheme fall within a wider array of postindustrial development tactics. Casinos, like prisons and sports stadiums, are framed as a means to regenerate economically depressed areas and create a low-wage ‘service class’ (Hackworth 2007). Few studies, however, examine who casinos employ and the quality of casino employment for its workers. Existing studies suggest that casino work is precarious, though the workers are mobile, treat the employment as temporary, and embrace an entrepreneurial ethic. For instance, Sallaz (2002, 2009), examining blackjack dealers in Las Vegas, suggests that their anger over low-wages and lack of job security is mitigated by the tipping relationship (i.e., blaming patrons for being “cheap”) and their frequent lateral movements across firms (as workers “chase tips”). This works to diffuse conflict between management and casino workers. Mutari and Figart (2015) argue that the flexible employment relations in Atlantic City casinos has led to workers making “casino work a temporary means of furthering their education so that they could enter other fields where they felt they could contribute to society” (Mutari and Figart 2015: 21). Here, casino workers use their mobility to work at other casinos in the area to cope with precarious employment. Taft (2016) extends this argument of casino workers being impermanent, mobile, and entrepreneurial, finding that casino workers embody the ‘new economy’ of work through their embrace of individualism and entrepreneurialism.

Despite these critiques of casino development, the economic arguments which conclude that casinos do equal an economic ‘good’ hold sway since casinos allow policymakers to forgo unpopular tax hikes or spending cuts. Indeed, politicians and casino corporations typically use a rationale which stresses the positive economic outcomes of casino development, pointing to revenue for state/provincial and municipal coffers, economic diversification, and employment as its primary payoffs. Claims for casinos equaling an economic “public good” for host communities have enabled the expansion of gambling venues across Canada and the US.

### *Gaps and Contribution*

Both perspectives outlined above interrogate whether casinos make good on contributing to the “public good” in host communities (i.e., revenue generation, economic diversification, and employment). Yet, while each acknowledges the importance of context, these perspectives do not empirically demonstrate how power struggles, shaped by larger political and economic forces, affect whether a casino contributes to the “public good.” Whether and how the spread of



casinos contributes to the “public good” of host communities in a deindustrializing milieu has also gone unexamined in the research; yet, governments increasingly employ casinos as a (re)development tool in communities experiencing deindustrialization. This thesis elucidates the power struggles over the distribution of the casino’s ‘good’ over nearly a 30-year period in an auto town experiencing economic decline.

Those examining whether casinos contribute to the economic “public good” tend to focus on aggregate indicators and macro impacts. Focusing on aggregate economic gains, power and, more specifically, how disparate interest groups may benefit unequally goes unexamined. Other scholars raise concerns regarding the unequal benefits (or the distribution of the “public good”) resulting from casino development, suggesting that these developments are fraught with inequality and power. Yet, these studies do not flesh out how such benefits become unequally distributed. Thus, inequality appears inevitable. Indeed, both perspectives focus on outcome, one in aggregate (net gain) and the other highlighting that some benefit more than others (winners/losers). Unlike previous research, I do not simply offer a ‘snapshot’ of the economic gains/losses or inequities experienced in a casino host community. I explore its history to elucidate where power lies. This enables a demonstration of how the distribution of the “public good” becomes unequal. There has been little to say about the deal making and power struggles behind casino development, how political and economic forces shape these struggles, and how this affects the distribution of the “public good.”

Economic analyses tend to demonstrate that casinos result in employment gains for host communities. Casinos have been found to decrease unemployment and to have a positive effect on wages. It can be gleaned from this that casino development is generally positive from an employment perspective (Chhabra 2007; Cotti 2009; Garrett 2006; Monchuk 2007). While the purveyors of casinos suggest that casinos provide ‘good jobs,’ other scholars suggest that these jobs represent the ‘new economy’ of precarious service work. The power struggles over whether casinos will make good on the promise of providing ‘good jobs’ (read: job quality) and how this ‘goodness’ is experienced over time, however, has been left largely unexplored.

In many studies, casino workers, if mentioned at all, tend to be framed as a disenfranchised group amid larger struggles over resources. When studies do examine casino employment, they tend to offer a negative assessment, suggesting that casinos provide precarious employment for a mobile and transient workforce. Nonetheless, the research is sparse and tends

to focus on non-union casinos and dealers (who tend to not be unionized even in unionized casinos) (Sallaz 2002; Taft 2016). This contrasts with the wider North American casino industry, which represents a major area of growth in unionization and has one of the highest union densities in the service sector (Waddoups 2002). My examination of whether casinos contribute to the “public good” in host communities is based on a unionized casino, while I examine workers employed in various job classifications throughout the casino.

In addition, studies addressing casino jobs tend to examine core gambling locations in the US (i.e., Las Vegas and Atlantic City) (Mutari and Figart 2015; Sallaz 2002).<sup>19</sup> These areas have a longstanding history in the service sector and possess several casinos, which enables casino workers to move laterally when dissatisfied with their employer. As a result, such cases can tell us little of what casinos mean, ideologically and materially, for workers when used as a tool to diversify and/or transition cities from a manufacturing to a more service-based economy. Moreover, these studies cannot speak to whether casinos equal ‘good jobs’ in areas reliant on a single casino operator and venue. Does casino development mean ‘good’ or ‘bad’ jobs for workers in this sort of milieu? In effect, in a deindustrializing context where there is reliance on a single casino, whether ‘casino jobs’ offer ‘good jobs’—and the power struggles behind what these jobs will offer—has not been examined. These are the struggles which determine what proportion of the ‘good’ (read: compensation and job quality) workers will receive.

Ultimately, I demonstrate that where casino development unfurls in terms of place/geography and time/historical moment matters for whether casinos contribute to the “public good.” I examine the power struggles over who and how much different interest groups benefit from the casino—and the political and economic forces shaping these struggles—in order to show how the gains become unequal and how the supposed key beneficiaries of casino development (i.e., municipal interests and casino workers) reconcile these ‘losses.’

### *Chapter Summaries: Casino Windsor and the “Public Good”*

During the campaign for casino development in Windsor, the “public good” centered on promises of revenue generation and economic diversification for the city and the creation of

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<sup>19</sup> Taft (2016) also investigates Pennsylvania, which is also arguably a ‘core’ gambling location, as it legalized casino and racino (i.e., horse racing with slot machines) operations in 2004 and opened five racinos in fiscal year 2007. Pennsylvania has opened an additional racino and six casinos since fiscal year 2008. This makes Pennsylvania the second largest commercial casino state outside of Nevada.

‘good jobs’ for displaced automotive workers. In exploring whether Casino Windsor contributed to the “public good,” this dissertation weighs in on: 1) the ability of host community stakeholders to pursue their growth interests (i.e., revenue generation and economic diversification) when attempting to transition to what they saw as their postindustrial future, 2) whether Casino Windsor actually facilitated a ‘postindustrial shift’ in the city’s economic landscape and labour market, 3) the struggle over casino workers’ wage entitlements in a historically unionized automotive town and whether these wages would reflect Windsor’s automotive ‘past’ or postindustrial ‘future,’ and 4) whether Casino Windsor has offered ‘good jobs.’

Based on 91 interviews with Windsor stakeholders (20)—from business, labour, and politics—as well as casino (28) and automotive (43) workers, the local news media, and descriptive statistics, I find that many of the promised returns of casino development did not materialize as expected. In short, has Casino Windsor made good on its promises of revenue generation, economic diversification, and ‘good jobs’? Looking over nearly 30 years, from Windsor acquiring (1988-1994) to hosting (1994-2015) a casino, the answer is yes and no. The casino has created revenue for the city. Yet, the revenue the city ended up receiving was minimal relative to the initial aspirations. The casino has also diversified the economy in the sense that it created another large employer outside of the automotive industry. The casino has taken on the form of a ‘one-stop shop’ and is seen as taking away clientele from smaller service and hospitality businesses. In addition, the identified employee pool (i.e., former automotive workers) did not end up getting the ‘good jobs’ at the casino and the promised “auto wages” for casino workers never materialized. Job quality at Casino Windsor has also moved from ‘good’ to ‘not so good’ over time. This dissertation unpacks how the expected ‘transition,’ from ‘cars to casinos,’ unfolded in Windsor, which entails examining whether Casino Windsor contributed to the “public good” and how Windsor stakeholders and casino workers have coped with unfulfilled promises.

Chapter 1 provides the historical backdrop for my case and details Windsor’s positioning over the 20<sup>th</sup> century to become Canada’s automotive capital. I layout Windsor’s economic trajectory over 30 years (1988-2015) in relation to the automotive industry. This provides the backdrop for Windsor’s economic struggle with the automotive industry during the process of acquiring a casino (1988-1994) to the booms and busts in automotive that Windsor has experienced while hosting the casino (1994-2015). This ebb and flow in the automotive industry

has shaped how the “public good” was mobilized, and whether and how Casino Windsor has contributed to the “public good” in terms of coping with the city’s heavy dependence on the automotive industry.

Chapter 2, “Casino Windsor: A ‘Grassroots’ Movement and a State-Down Initiative,” examines the negotiations between provincial and municipal level interests concerning the acquisition and development of Casino Windsor. This chapter lays out how provincial and municipal actors struggled over who was going to benefit from the casino. Research addressing the negotiations involved in developing casinos offers competing conclusions concerning the power dynamics which lie behind such developments. Much of the literature suggests that casinos are state-down initiatives (Calvano and Andersson 2010; Klassen and Cosgrave 2009). In order to challenge this assumption, I look at how the casino development transpired—and who got what. I find that casino development negotiation in Windsor was an interplay of municipal level interests and provincial interests vying for what portion of the ‘good’ they would receive. Nonetheless, power was not exercised in equal parts. In the end, the provincial interest of maximizing revenue generation for provincial coffers dictated the size and scope of the Casino Windsor project and what portion of the revenue the municipality would receive. In Windsor, there was an expectation that Windsor and the community would receive a larger share of the revenue and that the casino would be part of a larger diversification initiative. Nonetheless, Windsor stakeholders continue to emphasize that the Casino Windsor project reflects a “grassroots” movement. This discourse, I contend, allows Windsor stakeholders to maintain ownership that the casino has and continues to contribute to the “public good.”

In Chapter 3, “Casino Windsor as a Response to NAFTA and Automotive Job Loss,” I examine the imperative for the casino to transition supposedly soon-to-be displaced auto workers to the service sector. In examining who the casino was intended to—and those who it actually did—employ, my findings complicate the view that casinos work to transition regions from an industrial to a postindustrial economy (Balzarini and Shlay 2016; Calvano and Andersson 2010; DiGaetano and Lawless 1999; McCarthy 2002; Wacker 2006). I find the ‘crisis’ of free trade for auto did not materialize during the casino’s prosperous years. Instead, workers already in the service sector were pulled into the casino, concentrating many low-wage service workers from diverse jobs into a single facility. In addition, I discover that, given the relatively short ‘boom’ of the casino and its more prolonged ‘bust,’ the casino has not offered employment to automotive

workers who only later became displaced beginning in the mid-2000s. Interestingly, Windsor stakeholders' collective emphasis on the casino serving as a stopgap for manufacturing decline endured. This consistent framing across time (i.e., Windsor 'had no choice' because of manufacturing loss but to accept the casino) continues to justify the casino's existence and the "public good" it begets.

In Chapter 4, "The Canadian Auto Workers, the New Democratic Party, and the Casino Industry: A Struggle Over Wage Entitlements," I examine whether wages at Casino Windsor would reflect what Windsor stakeholders viewed as Windsor's soon-to-be *industrial past* being brought into Windsor's anticipated *postindustrial future*. My findings demonstrate that larger political and institutional forces ensured industrial wages would be left in the past. In Windsor, Ontario—an automotive union town—Casino Windsor contributing to the "public good" meant the casino offering "auto wages" (read: high pay relative to skillset). Indeed, Windsor's reliance, historically and contemporarily, on the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) unionized auto industry created a longstanding mindset about what a 'good job' ought to be. I examine the CAW's efforts but ultimate failure to bring this "industrial mentality"<sup>20</sup> to Casino Windsor and to casino workers. With the CAW unionizing casino workers, the casino seemingly presented an opportunity to bring Golden Age wages to the service sector. Like auto workers, Casino Windsor workers would supposedly receive wages that reflected a "share of the millions of dollars raked in at the casino," which these workers created for their employer (Cross 1994a). While this mentality persists among auto workers, as of my 2014-2015 interviews, Casino Windsor workers have embraced a market-oriented mentality concerning their wage entitlements. This chapter explains why the CAW was unsuccessful in bringing an "industrial mentality" of wage entitlements to their membership at Casino Windsor and the effects this has had on membership support and engagement. Windsor stakeholders and casino workers now embrace the idea that it was unrealistic and a mistake for the CAW and casino workers to have demanded "auto wages." By naturalizing the link between casino work, the service sector, and commodified wages, Casino Windsor continues to be upheld as contributing to the "public good."

In Chapter 5, "Casino Windsor Jobs: From Opportunity to Immobility and Precarity," I examine whether Casino Windsor fulfilled the promise of providing 'good jobs.' I find that the casino was an opportunity for both low-skilled women and men (60:40 women to men) coming

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<sup>20</sup> Labour leaders and casino workers used this term during interviews.

from the service sector. For these workers, Casino Windsor did represent economic mobility regarding wages, benefits, and job security. Casino Windsor workers now, however, complain of precarious work conditions and management's frequent disciplinary actions against them. These workers are 'free' to go elsewhere, but, in fact, there is nowhere else to go. This finding runs counter to past research that claims casino workers rely on their mobility to cope with the precarity experienced in the industry (Mutari and Figart 2015; Sallaz 2002; Taft 2016). With Windsor on an international border and with a longstanding high unemployment rate, Casino Windsor is 'the company' in the service sector. Casino Windsor workers cope with precarity and the 'goodness' of their jobs declining by providing good service to reclaim their value despite management's efforts to make them feel replaceable and valueless. In doing so, these workers, in their minds, become 'special' and irreplaceable. Since Casino Windsor still offers the 'best deal around' for workers possessing low-skills in the service sector, Casino Windsor workers seek to hold onto what they have. While the provision of 'good jobs' at Casino Windsor was fleeting, employment at Casino Windsor for these workers is their best option relative to the alternatives. Given this, Casino Windsor continues to contribute to the "public good" from the perspective of these workers although its 'goodness' has changed.

I conclude by answering the question, do casinos, in fact, attend to the "public good" (i.e., revenue generation, economic diversification, and 'good jobs') for host cities and their workers? The answer to this, based on the case of Casino Windsor, is mixed. This study disentangles how the 'good' of casinos becomes unequally distributed by detailing the power struggles, which are shaped by larger political and economic forces, happening in space and over time. These findings also speak to what casinos, as a growing economic redevelopment strategy, mean for host communities when used on an international border and in attempting to cope with deindustrialization. These findings also highlight the non-linear character of deindustrialization and how this affects whether and how the promises of the 'good' are fulfilled. Indeed, the case of Casino Windsor in Windsor, Ontario, depicts the challenges and intricacies of when a city, feeling under economic threat, attempts to 'get ahead of the curve' of deindustrialization and diversify into the service sector through a casino. More generally, this dissertation problematizes the idea that casino development is a ready solution in deindustrializing cities by showing how numerous geographic and temporal considerations colour whether casinos do contribute to the "public good" in host communities.

Casino Windsor, placed on an international border, was the first resort casino used as a redevelopment tool to cope with deindustrialization; yet this strategy has now spread across the globe, especially on state/provincial and international borders where states/provinces attempt to (re)capture gambling dollars (Dadayan 2016). Casino Windsor symbolizes many unmet expectations. Windsor, once an auto town, has now become a two-company town. In effect, Windsor's economic trajectory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—in terms of dependence on two large employers and worker precarity—does not seem so different from what Windsor experienced during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nonetheless, the ready alternatives for communities once heavily dependent on low-skilled manufacturing work remain elusive.

## Chapter 1: Windsor: Ontario: A “Company Town”

The Detroit River divides Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit, Michigan, which also demarcates the US-Canada border (see Figure 1). Windsor was founded in 1749 and constitutes the southernmost city in Canada (see Figure 2). Detroit sits three kilometers from Windsor, representing the closest US city. The ‘birthplace’ of the Canadian automotive industry, Windsor has long been seen as a smaller version of the Motor City, with a similar dependence on the Big Three automakers—Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler—for its primary industry. Windsor’s dependence on the auto industry made it a “company town” (Moore and Squires 1991).<sup>21</sup>

Historically, the automotive industry has served as a key source of Windsor’s tax revenue. The industry has also been—and continues to be—the main employer for Windsorites.<sup>22</sup> With automotive workers heavily unionized, the automotive industry in Windsor served for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a source of ‘good jobs’ (i.e., wages, benefits, and job protections) for many low-skilled workers. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, a deep recession heavily impacted Ontario’s manufacturing sector and hit Windsor’s automotive industry especially hard. The recession, coupled with angst about the implications of soon-to-be-signed NAFTA (i.e., tax dollars and manufacturing jobs leaving Windsor), worked to provoke concerns about Windsor’s heavy reliance on the automotive industry. As a result, talks began about diversifying Windsor’s economy via casino development. The expected demise of the automotive industry, however, failed to materialize. In lieu of providing jobs for laid off workers from the automotive industry, the casino pulled in workers from Windsor’s service sector.

The same year NAFTA was signed, in 1993, the Ontario government chose Windsor to host the first casino in the province. Legislatively, Casino Windsor—and future casinos across Ontario—would be “undertaken for the public good” (The Government of Ontario 1993). From the perspective of Windsor stakeholders, this meant helping to fill city coffers, diversifying Windsor’s economy, and providing ‘good jobs’ to supposedly soon-to-be displaced automotive workers. More generally, the casino would offer Windsor a way to transition away from an

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<sup>21</sup> “Company town” refers to a local economy which is overly reliant on a single industry and/or employer (Lord and Price 1992; Rushen 1995). This concept derives from the concept of company towns in early industrialism and pioneer towns, whereby the town or settlement was completely owned, built, and operated by an individual or corporate entrepreneur (Porteous 1970).

<sup>22</sup> In 2013, while the manufacturing sector comprised 13 percent of the GDP nationally and was the largest sector of the Canadian economy, in Windsor 37 percent of the GDP was based on manufacturing (Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce 2013).



economy overly reliant on the automotive industry towards a more diversified and service-based economy.

Despite expectations that NAFTA would result in the exodus of automakers (and supporting industries), the automotive industry continues to be the primary source of employment for Windsorites. Effectively, this anticipated upheaval did not take shape. However, over the past twenty years, Windsor has shifted economically as automotive employment has shrunk, though still remaining the largest employer in the city (i.e., Chrysler Assembly plant employed approximately 5,500 people in 2014), while Casino Windsor is now the second largest employer in the city and constitutes a sizeable portion of the municipality's revenues. With the casino a large employer, Windsor's economy is no longer as reliant on the automotive industry.

In this chapter, I describe the establishment of the automotive industry in Windsor over the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how Windsor became Canada's automotive capital. Next, I examine Windsor's economic trajectory over a nearly 30-year span (1988-2015) in relation to the automotive industry. This provides the backdrop for Windsor's economic struggle with the automotive industry during the process of acquiring a casino as well as the booms and busts in automotive during hosting the casino. This ebb and flow in the automotive industry has undoubtedly shaped whether and how Casino Windsor has contributed to the "public good" in terms of coping with the city's heavy dependence on the automotive industry.

Figure 1: Windsor, Ontario



Source: Janisse (2014)

Figure 2: Windsor, Ontario



Source: Geoscience News and Information (2017)

### *Automobile Manufacturing in Windsor, Ontario*

In 1904, the Ford Motor Company of Canada was established in Windsor, making it the ‘birthplace’ of the Canadian automotive industry. This was a year after Henry Ford founded the Ford Motor Company in Detroit in 1903, which, in effect, made Windsor an extension of Detroit’s auto industry. In 1920, General Motors (GM) opened an engine plant and in 1928 Chrysler Canada was founded in Windsor. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, these companies—along with several other automakers and automotive parts manufacturers—made Windsor the “Auto Capital of the British Empire” (Kulisek 2012).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Being located in Canada allowed these companies to have trade preferences with the British Commonwealth.

From 1908 to 1928, the population of Windsor grew from 21,000 to 105,000—almost entirely due to employment born out of the development of the automobile industry (Kulisek 2012). During the Great Depression, unemployment in Windsor reached 30 percent (some argue 50 percent) which spurred considerable out-migration (Kulisek 2012). The demand for war materials during WWII—and subsequent conversion of auto plants to supply such materials—resulted in employment gains for Windsor. Relatedly, the population of Windsor between 1941-1951 grew by 15 percent.<sup>24</sup>

From 1953 to 1962, the Canadian automotive industry began to experience difficulties as US-owned Big Three branch operations began importing an increasing number of US-made cars and parts from abroad. US auto makers increasingly had little incentive to invest in Canadian branch plants since it required operating behind a tariff wall in addition to Canada losing trading preferences (i.e., Imperial Preference) with the British Commonwealth (Crane 2017).<sup>25</sup> Imperial Preference was abolished after WWII through an agreement between the US and Britain, whereby Roosevelt demanded its dismantling as repayment for the US's Lend-Lease assistance during WWII.<sup>26</sup> With Canada no longer having the advantage of Imperial Preference, combined with a relatively small domestic market and the need for large economies of scale in automotive production, the automotive industry in Ontario entered into a period of decline post-WWII (Melanson 2009). As a result, the number of automotive workers in Windsor dropped to nearly half, and the population of Windsor declined from approximately 120,000 in 1951 to 114,000 in 1961.

The 1965 Canada-US Automotive Products Trade Agreement, also known as the Auto Pact, however, sought to bring US investment in automotive manufacturing back to Canada. The Auto Pact included tariff-free trade in autos and auto parts between Canada and the US. This agreement also entailed Big Three Canadian branch plant operations building as many cars and trucks as they sold in Canada and maintaining a base level of spending in Canada. In addition,

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<sup>24</sup> From approximately 104,000 to 120,000 people.

<sup>25</sup> "Imperial Preference," introduced by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier in 1896, gave Canadian firms preferential trade conditions with other Empire nations. Imperial Preference offered special advantage to the Canadian auto industry because US based automotive companies used their Canadian units to export to British Imperial nations around the world (Melanson 2009).

<sup>26</sup> The Lend-Lease Act of March 11, 1941, provided US military aid to foreign nations during World War II. It enabled the president to transfer arms or any other defense materials to "the government of any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States." The act permitted the US to support its war interests without being directly involved in battle by allowing the transfer of supplies without compensation to Britain, China, the Soviet Union, and other countries.

US manufacturers agreed to increase their auto investment in Canada for three years, spending a total of 60 percent of their sales on Canadian operations. Moreover, 50 percent of vehicles exported from Canada to the US had to be built in Canada (Crane 2017).

The Auto Pact immensely benefitted the Canadian automotive industry and Windsor in particular. Canada's share in the US-Canada automotive industry grew from 7.1 percent in 1965 to 11.2 percent in 1971 (Crane 2017; Dykes and Anastakis 2015; Kulisek 2012).<sup>27</sup> From 1961 to 1971, the population of Windsor almost doubled from 114,000 to 209,000. By 1975, the automotive industry was Canada's most important export industry while directly supporting over 100,000 well-paid, highly unionized jobs in Canada and approximately 18,000 jobs in Windsor (Crane 2017; Statistics Canada 1971).<sup>28</sup> Barring a recession in the early 1980s,<sup>29</sup> this number continued to slowly grow—with 22,500 Windsorites employed in automotive in 1987—up until a recession beginning in the late 1980s (Statistics Canada 1987-2016).<sup>30</sup> Below, I trace the course of the automotive industry in Windsor since 1988. This offers the economic backdrop under which Windsor had lobbied to acquire (1988-1994) and has hosted (1994-2015) a casino; a time during which Windsor attempted to shift from being 'car city' to a 'casino city.'

### *The State of Windsor's Automotive Industry from 1988–2015*

From 1989 to 1993, Windsor experienced a deep recession in its automotive industry due to a broader recession in Ontario's manufacturing sector.<sup>31</sup> While the recession was nation-wide, its impact in Ontario was much more acutely felt. From 1990 to 1992, approximately 235,000

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<sup>27</sup> In addition to the Auto Pact, the competitiveness of Canada's automotive industry was also aided by the low Canadian dollar, better healthcare compared to US automotive workers, and high productivity (Dykes and Anastakis 2015).

<sup>28</sup> From the 1970s through the mid-2000s, the automotive industry directly employed approximately 20,000 people, more or less, in the Windsor area (Statistics Canada 1971, 1987-2016). During this period, Windsor has maintained a total population of approximately 200,000. The industry employed more than one in every 10 Windsorites.

<sup>29</sup> The decline in the North American automotive industry in the early 1980s (1980-1982) was the result of the triple impact of the 1979 oil price shock, the loss of market share to overseas manufacturers, and the worst recession since the Great Depression (Cote 1989).

<sup>30</sup> Based on those employed in Transportation Equipment Manufacturing (336) in the Windsor CMA.

<sup>31</sup> The Canadian unemployment rate rose to 11.3 percent in 1992, four points higher than it had been in 1989 (7.5 percent). The effect on unemployment across the country was uneven, however, and particularly impacted Ontario. Ontario experienced a dramatic increase in unemployment, rising nearly six percentage points, from 5.1 percent to 10.9 percent. In contrast, western provinces experienced unemployment rate increases of less than two points (Gower 1996).



jobs were lost in Ontario.<sup>32</sup> Some 189,000 manufacturing jobs, accounting for more than 80 percent of the total net employment loss, were lost in Ontario between 1989 and 1992 (Economic Research and Analysis 1994). Ontario's downturn hit Windsor, with its heavy dependence on the automotive industry, particularly hard. The recession's effects were evinced, in part, in the rise in Windsor's unemployment rate. For instance, prior to the recession, Windsor had an unemployment rate of 7.7 percent in 1988 (Gower 1996). In the throes of the recession, Windsor's unemployment rate reached 12.9 percent in 1992 and 11.5 percent in 1993 (Gower 1996).<sup>33</sup> As a result of this recession, Windsor also experienced negative population growth, declining 0.87 percent from 1986 to 1991 (Canadian Census Analyzer 2014).<sup>34</sup> By contrast, overall population growth in Ontario increased 10.8 percent during this same period (Canadian Census Analyzer 2014).

An uptick in US vehicle demand and the falling Canadian dollar drove the rebound of the automotive industry in Windsor during the mid-1990s. The unemployment rate fell to 8.6 percent in 1995 and to 5.4 percent in 2000 (Gower 1996; Statistics Canada 1996-2000).<sup>35</sup> In fact, the automotive industry in Windsor was employing more people than it ever had, reaching an all-time high of approximately 28,100 people in 2000 (Statistics Canada 1987-2016).<sup>36</sup> With the recession over in 1993, the population decline ceased; Windsor's population grew from 1991 to 1996 by 3.3 percent and from 1996 to 2001 by 5.4 percent (Canadian Census Analyzer 2014).

In the early 2000s, however, automotive investment and employment in Canada began to deteriorate due to several factors. First, the Canadian dollar began to rise.<sup>37</sup> The increasing value of the Canadian dollar eliminated one of the Canadian automotive industry's key competitive

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<sup>32</sup> The automotive industry was hard hit by the appreciation of the Canadian dollar between 1989 and 1992; the favorable cost-competitive position of US producers and distributors; and by the Canada-US free trade agreement (i.e., Canada agreed to phase out its duty-remissions scheme, which allowed auto companies to offset tariffs on vehicles and all original parts and boosted Canadian output and employment) (Economic Research and Analysis 1994).

<sup>33</sup> These rates are reported at the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). These unemployment rates are relative to Canada's unemployment rate of 11.3 percent and Ontario's of 10.9 percent in 1992 (Gower 1996).

<sup>34</sup> Windsor's population, from 1986 to 1991, decreased from 193,110 to 191,435 people (Canadian Census Analyzer 2014). These counts are based on Census Subdivision level (i.e., municipality).

<sup>35</sup> These rates are reported at the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA).

<sup>36</sup> Based on those employed in Transportation Equipment Manufacturing in the Windsor CMA.

<sup>37</sup> The rising Canadian dollar was a result of rising commodity prices and the strength of the Canadian economy relative to the US economy. The Canadian dollar is a "commodity currency"—its value is based on the export of raw materials. With surging commodity prices due to the demand in energy and base construction materials created by China and India, "commodity currencies" grew in strength relative to the US which was also experiencing the weakening of economic fundamentals (Holden 2007).

advantages.<sup>38</sup> Second, the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (1989)<sup>39</sup> and the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA (1993) worked to erode the 1965 Canada-US Auto-Pact. These agreements eliminated the stipulations surrounding Canadian automotive investment and value-added requirements. NAFTA also enabled the entry of Mexico into the North American auto industry, which created a new continental competitor and propelled the decline in levels of automotive manufacturing employment in Canada and the US (Goldfield and Palmer 2007; Walker 1997; Weintraub and Sands 1998).<sup>40</sup> In addition, as the market shifted to smaller and more fuel-efficient models with smaller profit margins, the relatively high wages of automotive workers in Ontario (compared to those in the southern US and Mexico) became an increasing investment constraint (Cooper 2012). Finally, the increasing capital intensity of automotive manufacturing and a shift to automation has also resulted in the employment of fewer low-skilled workers (Sweeney 2014).

In 2005, Ford and General Motors began plant closings and mass layoffs in Windsor.<sup>41</sup> As of 2005, approximately 25,400 Windsorites were employed in automotive manufacturing in Windsor.<sup>42</sup> This number dropped to 18,200 over the next two years (Statistics Canada 1987-2016). With one auto manufacturing job supporting three to four retail, food, construction, and public service jobs, other significant job losses were incurred (Bell and Zacharilla 2014; Stantec 2006). The Great Recession beginning in 2008 compounded the effects of automotive

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<sup>38</sup> Both manufacturing and resource extraction are export-oriented industries. However, when resource extraction activity increases in proportion to other economic activities, it tends to push up the value of the Canadian dollar, hurting manufacturing. Indeed, manufacturing had decreased as a proportion of economic activity in Canada—a decline that is most visible in Windsor. A large part of the competitive advantage that southwestern Ontario, the manufacturing hub of Canada, once enjoyed was based on a low Canadian dollar (Geobey 2013). However, during the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was a shift in national economic focus from manufacturing towards resource extraction (Clarke, Gibson, Haley, and Stanford 2013; Spiro 2013).

<sup>39</sup> The Canada-US Free Trade Agreement still retained the Auto Pact's Canadian safeguards, but Canada agreed to phase out its duty remissions scheme (i.e., allowed auto companies to offset Canadian tariffs on all parts and vehicles imported into Canada by agreeing to increase the export of Canadian-made auto parts). In addition, Canada and the US agreed to phase out tariffs on cross-border trade in new vehicles and parts by non-Auto Pact producers over 10 years, starting in 1989. This meant that vehicles of Asian and European companies made in North America (i.e., Canada and the US) had the same free trade privileges as the original participants in the Auto Pact, provided they met the 50 percent North American content requirement set out in the agreement (later raised to 62.5 percent) (Crane 2017).

<sup>40</sup> Canada and the US elected to officially end the Auto Pact on February 19, 2001—although it had already lost much of its effectiveness—as the World Trade Organization deemed the agreement to be inconsistent with global trade rules in 2000 (Crane 2017).

<sup>41</sup> In 2007, the Ford Essex engine plant and the Ford casting plant closed. In 2010, with only 500 workers remaining—having once employed over 7,000 workers—the GM transmission plant also closed. The Ford Essex aluminum plant began closing in 2009 and fully closed in 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Based on those employed in Transportation Equipment Manufacturing in the Windsor CMA.

employment decline in Windsor. In 2009, the unemployment rate in Windsor reached its highest level since the Great Depression at 13.9 percent (Statistics Canada 2001-2016).<sup>43</sup> Due to the fallout from the Great Recession, automotive manufacturing was employing approximately 12,700 people in the Windsor area in 2012 (Statistics Canada 1987-2016).<sup>44</sup> This constitutes an all-time low since the establishment of the Auto Pact in 1965, at which time Windsor's automotive industry was employing approximately 20,000 people in the Windsor area. Automotive employment numbers have only slightly improved since 2012. Windsor's unemployment from 2011 to 2015 remained steady with yearly averages between 8.9 and 9.9 percent (Statistics Canada 2001-2016).<sup>45</sup> In addition, Windsor set the record for having the most number of months with the highest unemployment rate in the country since 2001, evincing Windsor's economic struggle with the automotive industry during the 2000s, up through the Great Recession, and afterwards (Thompson 2015).<sup>46</sup>

From 2002 to 2012, auto manufacturing has also increasingly contributed less to Windsor's municipal tax revenues. The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce conducted a 2013 study that illustrates the automotive industry's declining tax contribution to the City of Windsor (see Figure 3). For instance, seven of Windsor's top ten business taxpayers in 2002 were Big Three industrial properties, while manufacturing contributed 16.3 percent of the taxes. To compare, in 2012, Big Three industrial properties comprise only three of Windsor's top ten taxpayers while manufacturing provided 9.1 percent of the city's total property tax take (Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce 2013).

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<sup>43</sup> Rate based on the CMA.

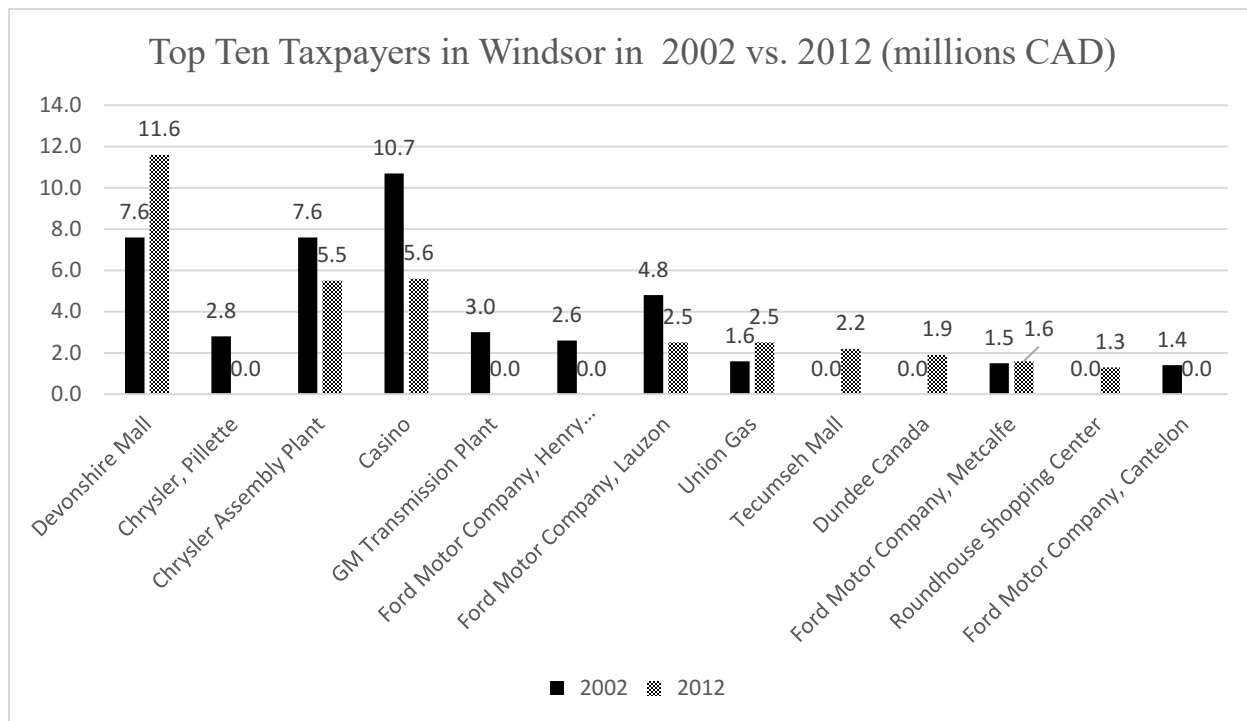
<sup>44</sup> Based on those employed in Transportation Equipment Manufacturing in the Windsor CMA.

<sup>45</sup> In 2015, Windsor's CMA unemployment rate was 9.8 percent while the national average was 6.8 percent (Statistics Canada 2001-2016).

<sup>46</sup> As of July 2015, Windsor had 66 months with the highest unemployment rate in the nation.



Figure 3: Top Ten Windsor Taxpayers in 2002 and 2012



Source: Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, Municipal Finance & Taxation Paper, June 2013

\*A label of 0.0 does not mean that there was no contribution to the tax base, but rather that their contribution fell below one million CAD. There are only nine properties reported in 2012 since I combined the 'casino' and the 'casino hotel/convention center,' which were considered as two separate properties in the report.

### *Casino Windsor*

In 1993, the year NAFTA was signed, the Ontario government passed the Ontario Casino Corporation Act allowing for the establishment of casinos in Ontario. This mirrored a trend occurring across North America, beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s—that is, the development of casinos. Many saw free trade agreements, such as NAFTA, as portending industrial decline, declining tax revenues for cities, and job losses for low-skilled workers (Schüll 2012). Casinos have been promoted as a development strategy in response to deindustrialization (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Klassen and Cosgrave 2009; Ryan 2012). A casino was conceptualized as a way to relieve Windsor of its primary dependence on the automotive industry by providing revenues and economic diversity for the city and 'good jobs' for displaced auto workers.

In 1994, Windsor acquired Casino Windsor, the first resort-style casino in Canada and the US outside of Las Vegas and Atlantic City. From 1994 to 1998, Casino Windsor was temporarily housed in the retrofitted Windsor Art Gallery (see Figure 4). In 1998, Casino Windsor's permanent location opened (see Figure 5). Casino Windsor included a 24-story hotel, 170,000 square feet of gaming space plus restaurants, bars, entertainment lounge, and retail shops. The hotel included 400 guest rooms and included ballrooms, meeting rooms, pre-function areas, a health club, and a pool.

Figure 4: Casino Windsor, 1994-1998



Source: Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (2016)

Figure 5: Casino Windsor, Permanent Location, 1998-2008



Source: Eastern Construction (2017)

Major renovations and rebranding took place during 2007-2008, making the size of the structure 1.2 million square feet (Windsor Utilities Commission 2013). Casino Windsor was renamed Caesars Windsor (See Figure 6)—re-themed after the Roman Empire—involving an additional \$400M provincial government investment (Klassen and Cosgrave 2009; Ryan 2012).<sup>47</sup> The expansion included another hotel tower of 27-stories, a 5,000 seat “Colosseum” as an entertainment center, several new upscale eateries and bars, a large buffet, and a 100,000 square feet convention space. Casino Windsor is the largest casino in Canada and the tallest structure in Windsor. The property now has six restaurants and two hotels with a total of 758 rooms (Ryan 2012). The gaming space features 2,300 slot machines and 94 table games.

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<sup>47</sup> With the aim of protecting revenues at Casino Windsor, the OLG removed slot machines from the Windsor Raceway (harness racing) venue located 12 km from Casino Windsor under the *Modernizing Lottery and Gaming in Ontario* initiative. This was a large contributing factor in the closure of Windsor Raceway in August 2012 (CBC News 2012).

Figure 6: Casino Windsor (Caesars Windsor), After 2008 Expansion



Source: Canadian Gaming Business (2013)

In 1993, Windsor, Ontario, in a deep recession and heavily dependent on the automotive industry, acquired a casino. Windsor's proximity to the ruination of postindustrial Detroit (High 2003)<sup>48</sup> also served as a stark warning of what Windsor's future could look like if it did not diversify. The idea of a casino emerged in the late 1980s as a strategy to diversify Windsor's economy—in anticipation of NAFTA—to alleviate its heavy reliance on the automotive industry. The Ontario government's two main justifications for casino development, as articulated in the Ontario Casino Corporation Act (1993), were: 1) the enhancement of the economic development of certain regions and 2) the generation of provincial revenues. The Casino Act also stipulated that such developments be *undertaken for the "public good"* (The Government of Ontario 1993). "Public good" in this legislation, however, remains undefined.

In this dissertation, I explore whether and how the casino has contributed to the "public good" from the perspective of Windsor stakeholders and casino workers. I consider this during the process of Windsor acquiring (1988-1994) and then hosting (1994-2015) a casino over nearly a 30-year period. I conceptualize the "public good" based on the promises made by political

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<sup>48</sup> In Detroit, the 'rusting of the rust belt' began in the 1950s, prior to the much-cited shocks of the 1970s oil crisis, the 'race to the bottom' of globalized labour, and the influx of car and steel imports (Sugrue 1999). While the forces of global capitalism have worked to further these trends, the state-corporate strategy of relocating manufacturing plants outside of inner cities affected Detroit and its population much earlier (Zukin 1993). As investment and employment emptied out of Detroit, the population has steadily declined over 60 percent since 1950, from approximately 1.8 million to approximately 673,000 people in 2016.

interests to get Windsor—a city and community with primary dependence on the automotive industry and the ‘good jobs’ it offered—‘on board’ with casino development. Accordingly, promises of the casino fulfilling the “public good” centered on Casino Windsor offering: 1) revenue generation, 2) economic diversification for the city, and 3) ‘good jobs’ to former automotive workers who were experiencing job loss. More broadly, this thesis seeks to understand what happened over nearly three decades as a ‘car city’ sought to become a casino one and whether promises of the “public good” were fulfilled.

### *Methods*

Casino Windsor began as a pilot project over 20 years ago; if it was successful, the provincial government would consider opening other casinos across Ontario. Within months of its opening in 1994, Casino Windsor became the “highest-grossing casino in the world, per square foot” (Vander Doelen 2014). Windsor is now commonly cited as an example for other cities contemplating a casino (Henriksson and Lispey 1999; Vander Doelen 2014).

In this dissertation, I consider: what did this economic development strategy mean, both ideologically and materially, for a city and its workers who felt that their primary industry, automotive, was under threat? How were the city of Windsor and the community convinced to host a casino? In the view of Windsor stakeholders and casino workers, did Casino Windsor attend to the “public good”? More specifically, were Windsor stakeholders able to pursue their diversification and growth interests? Did displaced auto workers, in fact, seek employment at the casino? Moving from a highly-unionized automotive industry to the service sector, did employment at Casino Windsor equal moving to low-wage ‘postindustrial’ work, both ideologically and materially? Did Casino Windsor offer ‘good jobs’ for low-skilled workers?

The analyses offered are based on 91 semi-structured interviews (20 Windsor ‘stakeholders,’ 43 automotive workers, and 28 casino workers)—the local newspaper, the *Windsor Star* (from 1988-2015), and descriptive statistics. In Appendix A, I offer a list of interviewees. To respect confidentiality, for Windsor stakeholders, I provide their pseudonym and general position. For automotive assembly workers and casino workers, I offer their pseudonym and year hired. I conducted all of the interviews from September 2014 to April 2015. Interviews lasted between one to three hours. Interview guides are provided in Appendix B. Approval to conduct this proposed research was received from the McGill Research Ethics

Board. The majority of interviews were conducted one on one. A small portion of the interviews with workers were done with spouses/partners present. Some of these partners worked at the casino or auto plant while some worked elsewhere.<sup>49</sup> If the partner did not work at the casino or auto plant, this joint interview was counted as consisting of one respondent. If the spouse did work at the casino or auto plant, the interview was counted as consisting of two respondents.

The purposive sample of Windsor stakeholders consisted of Windsor business, labour, and political (municipal, provincial, and federal) representatives—all of whom had some ‘stake’ in the casino at various points in time. Importantly, the interests of these stakeholders differ. For instance, those from the business community in Windsor took particular interest in the visitation rates of the casino and the ability of other Windsor businesses to gain spillover benefits from casino visitation. In contrast, labour representatives were invested in the employment effects of the casino while political representatives were more concerned with the ability of municipal interests to capitalize on casino revenue generation. All Windsor stakeholders interviewed were eager to speak on the range of impacts the casino had on the community and city, from revenue generation, to business growth and/or cannibalization, to employment, to problem gambling. I questioned Windsor stakeholders on the process of acquiring Casino Windsor, why Windsor was chosen to host, and what the casino has offered the community over its existence. Aside from these core questions, I tailored the guides to each Windsor stakeholder based on their specific relationship to the casino (see Appendix B, Main Interview Guide for Windsor Stakeholders). For instance, some business, labour, and political representatives were intimately involved in the process of bringing the casino to Windsor. In contrast, other Windsor stakeholders were only more recently involved in the happenings of Casino Windsor since they were either recently elected or appointed to their position. Interviews with Windsor stakeholders offered much insight into the power dynamics which lay behind acquiring and hosting the casino.

The purposive sample of auto and casino workers allowed me to explore and interrogate whether the casino made good on the promise of creating ‘good jobs’ in a city where the automotive industry was under threat. Their interview questions focused on their employment

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<sup>49</sup> Of the 28 casino workers interviewed, one casino worker was interviewed with her husband present (who did not work at the casino) and four casino workers (two couples) interviewed with their partner who worked at the casino. Of the 43 automotive workers interviewed, one automotive worker was interviewed with his wife present (who did not work at the plant) and four automotive workers (two couples) interviewed with their partner who worked at the same automotive plant.



histories and their understandings of the place of the automotive and casino industry in the city (see Appendix B, Interview Guide for Casino and Automotive Workers). Given that the casino was brought into the city on the premise that it would provide employment to laid off automotive workers, I expected to find automotive workers who transitioned to the casino for employment in my sample of casino workers. Therefore, my initial intent was to have a comparative sample of automotive workers still employed in automotive and casino workers (some of who had employment in the automotive industry as part of their recent job history). I discovered, however, that former auto workers did not appear in my sample of casino workers. Instead, casino workers predominately possessed employment histories in the service sector.

From September 2014 to May 2015, I conducted 20 interviews with Windsor stakeholders. They were recruited by calling and/or emailing them and requesting an interview. Interviews were conducted at their place of work or at a coffee shop. To recruit automotive workers, I stood outside the plant gates during the day and the afternoon shift change at the Chrysler Windsor Assembly plant and the Ford Engine plant, requesting workers' participation as they either were coming into or leaving work. For those who expressed interest, I requested their phone number and name and then called them at a later date to set up a place and time for interview. I obtained 131 phone numbers outside of the plant gates. I attempted to contact them all. Sometimes this involved leaving a message and/or retrying to contact them later. In some instances, I was unable to make phone contact. For others, I was unable to interview either due to scheduling constraints or the individual's expressed unwillingness on second contact to participate. Ultimately, I conducted a total of 43 auto worker interviews. The majority of interviews were done at coffee shops throughout the city. Five automotive worker interviews were obtained through snowball sampling.<sup>50</sup>

Recruiting casino workers was a more challenging undertaking. Casino Windsor bans workers from speaking with the media about the casino. I was unaware of this on entering the field and began recruitment by placing approximately 110 flyers on the cars of casino workers in the casino's parking garage. Not receiving a single call, I discussed this recruitment failure with a relative living in Windsor. She informed me of a friend who was a casino worker who lived

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<sup>50</sup> While not pertinent to these analyses, the sample of auto workers was cross-sectioned by gambling behavior. This recruitment was more difficult. Of the 21 respondents who were auto workers and gambled, five were recruited through snowball sampling from fellow auto workers.

nearby, suggesting that I approach her at her home. I went to this woman's home and asked if she would be willing to participate, assuring her confidentiality. She quickly declined, fearful of losing her job, despite my assurances that I was not from the media and would protect her identity. Effectively, the casino workers were inaccessible through direct recruitment.

I then requested access through the casino's Human Resource department, which was denied.<sup>51</sup> Reaching out to the union representing the casino workers—Unifor Local 444<sup>52</sup>—the union proposed to the casino that I conduct focus groups on-site at the casino, with permission from the employer. Again, the casino denied this proposal. I then attended a Unifor Local 444 meeting where I was introduced to the casino union membership. At that meeting, the Local president introduced me to the membership and assured members of my ability to guarantee confidentiality. I then offered a brief description of my study, where I emphasized that I was a researcher and not affiliated with the media. In the end, some of the casino workers from the union hall meeting volunteered to be interviewed, allowing me to obtain a sample of 28 casino workers.<sup>53</sup> These interviews were conducted at coffee shops throughout the city.

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Additional notes were taken with some of the casino workers since they would offer additional information on their workplace that they felt uncomfortable having recorded. Using MAXQDA 12 software, I used an abductive approach (Timmermans and Tavory 2012) to analyze the data, which employs rigorous data analysis against the backdrop of expertise in the various literatures addressing casino development. I read through each of the 91 transcripts and employed topic coding (Richards 2014). This entailed identifying major ideas (i.e., passages addressing the same topic) across interviews. Then, I further refined these codes based on their analytic relevance. For instance, all Windsor stakeholders discussed the process of how the casino was brought to

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<sup>51</sup> Casino Windsor's Human Resource department denied my requests to: access workers, acquire any aggregate data on the casino workforce, and to obtain information regarding operations at Casino Windsor. A top executive at Casino Windsor, however, did participate in an interview.

<sup>52</sup> While originally represented by the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), as of September 2013, the CAW and the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union merged to create the largest private sector union in Canada, Unifor.

<sup>53</sup> The casino workers represent a self-selected sample (as I did not approach the casino workers directly at the union hall meeting). Undoubtedly, casino workers at the union hall meeting were likely more involved in union politics than other casino workers. Therefore, their opinions may be different than the broader population of Casino Windsor workers. This may be particularly true in the way in which they discuss employment at Casino Windsor. For instance, since these casino workers are more likely involved in union politics, these casino workers may adopt a more oppositional/militant stance against Casino Windsor management.



Windsor. These interview segments were labeled “process of casino acquisition.” Analytic codes were then used to further break down these same passages, which spoke to whether the casino was a state-down initiative and/or allowed city level stakeholders to pursue their growth interests (Richards 2014). These codes were then further refined into codes examining the intra-local and municipal/provincial negotiations surrounding casino acquisition.

Finally, I surveyed the local newspaper, the *Windsor Star*—Windsor’s only major newspaper—from 1988 to 2015, when the idea of hosting a casino first emerged up until I finished conducting interviews in 2015. With the search terms “casino” and “gamble,” I utilized the Canadian Newsstand online database<sup>54</sup> to find articles which mentioned either word during this period. From these articles, I drew out the ‘official’ narrative being produced within the city in ‘real time.’ This offered further backdrop as to whether and how Casino Windsor has attended to the “public good” based on the process of bringing the casino into the city and community, the forms it has taken, whether and how it contributed to municipal revenues and diversification, and whether it offered ‘good jobs.’

Over the past century, Windsor’s automotive industry has faced varied challenges to its strength and survival. These challenges have been acutely felt in Windsor due to its considerable reliance on the automotive industry. In 1993, faced with a deep recession and the looming consequences of soon-to-be signed free trade agreements to Windsor’s automotive industry, Windsor stakeholders felt they were given the ‘gift’ of a casino by the Ontario provincial government. In the chapters to follow, I consider what it meant for a ‘car city’ to try and become a ‘casino city’ in relation to the “public good.” Whether and how the casino delivered on the promises of the “public good,” however, has not been straightforward.

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<sup>54</sup> Now titled “Canadian Newsstream”: <https://search-proquest-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/canadiannews/index?accountid=12339>.

## Chapter 2: Casino Windsor: A “Grassroots” Movement and a State-Down Initiative

*“There is no popular or grassroots movement for the expansion of legalized gambling.” – Gross (1998: 205), “Legal Gambling as a Strategy for Economic Development” in Economic Development Quarterly.*

The Ontario government’s 1993 Casino Act, which legalizes state-sanctioned casino development in Ontario, stipulates such developments are to attend to the “public good.” This chapter examines the negotiations between provincial and municipal level interests concerning the acquisition and development of Casino Windsor and whether it reflects the Ontario government attending to the “public good.” More specifically, I examine whether Casino Windsor was a state-down initiative or a development effort where Windsor stakeholders and community were able to pursue their growth interests. Research addressing the negotiations involved in developing casinos offers competing conclusions concerning the power dynamics which lie behind such developments. Some argue that casinos are state-down initiatives (Calvano and Andersson 2010; Klassen and Cosgrave 2009) while others suggest that casinos put communities in the role of resource holder (Felsenstein, Littlepage, and Klacik 1999). This case study of Casino Windsor, however, suggests that casino development is an interplay of both; nonetheless, power was not exercised in equal parts.

Through 20 interviews conducted from 2014 to 2015 with Windsor stakeholders from business, labour, and politics and an analysis of local news coverage in the *Windsor Star* from 1988 to 1994—which covers the casino from an idea to opening day—I discover a more complex story than one of a state/province trumping community interests or municipal level stakeholders pursuing their growth interests. The notion that powerful state/provincial interests are imposing casinos on municipalities and communities oversimplifies, I find, a far more complex and localized struggle around casino development. Instead of the provincial government ‘handing down’ the mandate to introduce a casino, the case of Casino Windsor suggests a more complex interplay of stakeholders, involving provincial interests, local governments, as well as other community interests. Community resistance against the casino concerning anticipated social costs (Sallaz 2009), and, by extension, what typically tends to be framed as a predatory state/province, did not materialize in this case. In fact, the economic interest for a casino found its impetus from local stakeholders and the community. Only later did provincial interests become involved. Yet, in the end, provincial interests marginalized Windsor stakeholders.

In interviews with Windsor stakeholders, all stressed that Windsor was successful in acting in its own economic interests to acquire a casino from the province. Indeed, from the perspective of Windsor stakeholders, the development of Casino Windsor represents a case of municipal entrepreneurialism (Castell 1989, 1996; Czarniawska 2002; Harvey 1989). I discover, however, that their current account of events only tells part of the story. Local newspaper coverage from 1988 to 1994—which features the same stakeholder groups and, at times, the very same individuals I interviewed—suggests that the provincial government co-opted Windsor stakeholders’ plans and their generation of broader community support. Importantly, however, local Windsor stakeholders fostered community buy-in based on the promises of the initial ‘made-in-Windsor’ casino proposal. More powerful provincial interests concerned with generating maximum revenue for provincial coffers, however, transformed the initial plans of local stakeholders.

*Who* spearheaded the casino’s development and *what* the casino development was intended to be (i.e., a smaller Monte Carlo-style casino appended to a larger development project which would be owned and operated by a joint provincial and municipal partnership) shifted. In fact, to capture maximum revenue for provincial coffers, provincial interests used competition between economically depressed cities to co-opt the Windsor casino alliance’s project and their generation of broader community support. This case, by tracking the development of Casino Windsor from idea to implementation, complicates the existing literature on the power dynamics between state/provincial and municipal level interests in the acquisition of casinos. Windsor stakeholders’ contemporary accounts articulated during our interviews suggest that Windsor stakeholders with the support of the Windsor community successfully pursued the casino for Windsor’s “public good.” What the community originally endorsed, however, shifted. Effectively, this casino project was neither simply a “grassroots” movement reflecting successful municipal entrepreneurialism, as contemporary Windsor stakeholders vouch, nor a top-down (i.e., state-lead) initiative as commonly assumed (Klassen and Cosgrave 2009). These competing versions of how the casino came to be and the form it took coalesce in a more complicated picture of the power dynamics behind casino development.

In this chapter, I highlight the incoherencies in the seemingly ‘coherent account’ from interviews with Windsor stakeholders. These incoherencies result in Windsor stakeholders’ contemporarily overemphasizing the ability of local interests to be agents acting on behalf of the

community's interests. These later accounts in 2014-2015 interviews obscure the power dynamics underlying this development. In the end, Windsor stakeholders actually lost the ability to prioritize municipal interests. Yet, through an entrepreneurial discourse,<sup>55</sup> Windsor stakeholders attempt to salvage the power of municipal level interests and discursively manage accountability by maintaining that the city 'got what it wanted.' This discourse of local entrepreneurial capacity suggests and perpetuates the misnomer that municipal entrepreneurial efforts are an effective strategy for cities in economic decline to pursue their growth interests.

I review the literature on urban redevelopment and casino development below. Then, I construct the story of what happened based on current recollections of Windsor stakeholders, suggesting that the casino coming to Windsor was based on community support. Next, I examine the *Windsor Star's* coverage during the casino acquisition period. I compare my interview data with that found in the local news media. Put simply, I compare present day accounts of what Windsor stakeholders remember happening to what these stakeholder groups, and at times, the same individuals, said when events were unfolding. I, subsequently, discuss the implications of Windsor stakeholders remembering the casino as a project done by Windsor stakeholders for Windsor constituents compared to the increasingly powerless role Windsor stakeholders and the Windsor community eventually held during the process. I find that, while Windsor stakeholders were initially acting in an entrepreneurial capacity to acquire a casino, provincial government interests eventually co-opted this initiative. The province placed economically depressed cities in competition with one another for Ontario's first casino license to execute this co-optation.

### *Casinos and Urban Redevelopment*

The spread of casinos is embedded within a broader system of urban redevelopment initiatives. This redevelopment is part of tourist-centered strategies, where museums, sports stadiums, convention centers, and mega-events have become an integral part of urban re-imaging and place competitiveness (Peck and Tickell 2002; Ryan 2012). This growth relies on visitor leisure consumption and is a strategy to move away from dependence on industrial production which has declined or been lost (Clark and Lloyd 2002; Hackworth 2007; Ioannides and Petridou

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<sup>55</sup> Discourse equals the social construction of reality via its representation. Discourses in themselves generate meanings and are constitutive (Mosedale 2016; Philo 2011).

2016; Judd 1995). Casino development provides a case to examine processes behind state/provincial and municipal interests attempting to economically resuscitate cities (Benjamin 2016; Brenner and Theodore 2002; Ward 2000; Wilson 2004).

With global economic shifts, larger state/provincial and federal powers have responsabilized cities with re-attracting capital (Alfasi and Fenster 2009; Andranovich et al. 2001; Essex and Chalkley 1998; Hiller 2000; Oliver 2011; Waitt 1999; Whitelegg 2000). This “municipal entrepreneurialism” maps onto the historical decrease in federal and state/provincial support for cities (Sagalyn 1990).<sup>56</sup> Reduced public funding for urban development and social services requires cities to find new sources of revenue. Federal devolution to the municipal level also intensifies inter-urban competition to re-attract capital. To re-attract capital, municipalities partake in inter-city competitions for investment from state and private interests. Competition between cities, however, does not end at attracting investment. For economic survival, cities adopt place-competitive strategies to lure ‘outside’ leisure dollars from neighbouring jurisdictions (Hall 2006; Sager 2011).

Alliances between local stakeholders (including developers and land owners) and municipal officials heavily shape urban redevelopment (Feagin 1985; Logan and Molotch 1987; Lowe 2008; Molotch 1976; Oliver 2011; Schilling and Logan 2008; Wilson and Wouters 2003). Molotch’s (1976: 310) theorization of the city as a growth machine highlights the fact that the pursuit of growth creates consensus and partnerships among local interest groups whose interests otherwise conflict. Interest groups, like labour and business, forge coalitions under pro-growth agendas. Moreover, the growth machine framework highlights that urban redevelopment projects are not simply top-down impositions from states/provinces and/or capital but can be complex accomplishments between local stakeholders, state, and capital interests (Wilson 2004).

Local stakeholders, in addition, are central to fostering a social license within communities for redevelopment projects. Indeed, the success of a redevelopment project relies on attaining acceptance or ‘buy-in’ from constituents (Cochrane 2007; Ward 2003). To gain acceptance, discourses surrounding urban projects may simplify and hide the complexity of urban redevelopment strategies (Wilson 2004). To gain acceptance, growth agents ‘talk’ urban

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<sup>56</sup> Since the 1970s, municipal governments have become increasingly responsible for their economic development in contrast to the managerial focus (i.e., providing services) of past municipal governments (Harvey 1989).

entrepreneurialism, which may simplify and hide the complexity of urban redevelopment strategies (Jessop 1997, 1998; Leitner 1991; Wilson 2004). Such discourses make opaque urban redevelopment negotiations, making it impossible for local constituents to hold accountable state/provincial interests and local interests (Owen 2002). Unpacking discourses around urban redevelopment projects offers a pathway to understand how redevelopment projects are normalized, despite such projects potentially not benefiting the host community (Hall and Hubbard 1998; Weber 2002; Wilson and Wouters 2003).

Research specifically addressing casino development offers competing conclusions concerning the power of local-municipal interests to pursue their growth interests. Much of the literature suggests that casinos are state-down initiatives where state/provincial powers, in co-operation with corporate interests, extract wealth from working-class and/or declining cities (Calvano and Andersson 2010). For instance, Klassen and Cosgrave (2009) specifically cite Casino Windsor as an example of casinos being state-down initiatives whereby states/provinces prey on working-class communities. Klassen and Cosgrave (2009) also claim that the Ontario provincial government pursued and chose Windsor to host Ontario's first casino because of its Francophone and Catholic community who were hypothesized to be less opposed to gambling than Anglo-Protestants. For these reasons, the Ontario government was able to realize its interests of revenue generation. Indeed, these arguments tend to suggest that states/provinces pursue casinos and prey on vulnerable communities. Municipal and community interests thus have little power to determine their development paths and are at the mercy of cash-hungry states/provinces. In contrast, Felsenstein, Littlepage, and Klacik (1999) argue that casinos reverse the traditional economic development game, putting communities in the role of resource holder. Felsenstein et al. (1999: 410), examining the limited license state of Indiana,<sup>57</sup> suggest that gaming corporations who bid for gaming licenses "chase" communities. Research therefore offers mixed evidence of whether casino developments place municipal level interests/communities in the 'driver's seat' of determining their economic growth.

This chapter follows the construction of an economic redevelopment policy which had the legislated goal of enhancing the economic development of a declining city and attending to

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<sup>57</sup> In limited license states, state governments regulate the casino industry and award licenses to casino operators in a chosen host community. Outside of Las Vegas and Mississippi, this is the most typical form of casino regulation in North America.

the “public good” (The Government of Ontario 1993). Interrogating the power struggle behind this redevelopment project unearths the politics which constructed and determined who, in material terms, got what, where, when, and how (Block 2011; Brenner and Theodore 2002: 351; Hackworth and Moriah 2006; Mele 2011; Peck and Tickell 2002; Somers and Block 2005). I explore the role of local stakeholders in the development of a casino and its negotiations with provincial interests. I ask, why and how did Windsor—the automotive capital of Canada—come to host a resort casino? Does the development of Casino Windsor reflect the ‘entrepreneurial turn’ where municipal level interests could pursue their growth agenda? Or, in contrast, does the casino represent a top-down imposition from larger state/provincial powers? What were the larger political and economic forces which shaped whether and *how much* of the “public good” (i.e., revenue generation, economic diversification, and ‘good jobs’) Windsor would receive?

#### *Casino Windsor: A “Grassroots” Movement*

*I remember that there were some tremendous cheerleaders here. I remember [there] being this sort of groundswell of support, and I remember it being politically charged, meaning that there were some real champions at the provincial level. So, I think it was a combination of all of those factors, and it was a relentless sort of pursuit. It was not like the province said, ‘Oh here is a letter, we’d like to invite you to build a casino.’ I see it back then as something that we really needed and there were some people that were just not going to take ‘no’ for an answer. – Jeff, Windsor tourism representative*

*Windsor was first to get a casino because work had been done locally to gauge public opinion. – John, Windsor NDP political representative*

An emphasis on a ‘consensus’ of community support for a casino rather than resistance ran throughout 2014 interviews with Windsor stakeholders. Mike, a Windsor labour leader, notes there “was total community buy-in” while Calvin, a Windsor Liberal political representative, states, “we were the first one to embrace it.” Jim, a former Windsor New Democratic Party (NDP) political representative, also states, “There was little resistance. I think it was the groups that came together. [...] The labour movement was on side, the Chamber [of Commerce] was onside. We covered off a fair amount.” Alex, a Windsor Chamber of Commerce representative, also emphasizes the agreement within the community, saying:

Part of the reason was that everyone in town agreed. Labour unions, business community, we were all on board for this. This made the decision for then premier Bob Rae much

easier because of the cross-section of support. There was a small group [against the casino], but it really never took off or went anywhere. I'm not just saying that to be biased, but as someone working for the mayor, in the mayor's office, we monitored public opinion and quite closely. [...] There was nothing material. No issue or idea is 100 percent buy-in. But we were pretty much as close as you can get to that.

Tom, a Windsor labour leader, stresses community approval and the lack of resistance:

The NDP made it clear that this has to be a decision that got the approval of the majority of the citizens and they were successful on doing it. By the way, that's the way they should work on every project. If you can get unanimous consent from all of the stakeholders, then those that resist change, find themselves on the outside. [...] By bringing us all together, we did it. I mean, there was no controversy. [...] We never had a 'no campaign' because, let's be clear, if the NDP would have not engaged the labour movement, we might have had a no campaign. Or the business community.

This suggests that there was not only community support but that the provincial government was working in partnership with local stakeholders. Jeff, a Windsor tourism representative, also reflects on the public support for the casino, the "grassroots" approach Windsor stakeholders adopted, and the NDP's ability to "listen," saying:

We've had plenty of [municipal] council meetings, and council sessions, but we felt it was the overwhelming public support for it, as a way to diversify our economy since, historically, we've been known as an automotive center, and there's lots of good things associated with that, but, as we know, nothing is... you know, chiseled in stone. [...] I would give full props to the grassroots approach that this community took. And I commend the NDP for listening, and for following along with it, and recognizing the importance.

Recalling how little local resistance there was to hosting a casino, Windsor stakeholders juxtaposed this to other communities opposing casino developments. Using counterexamples of cities which did resist hosting a casino, Mike, a former Windsor labour leader, cites the importance of developing "grassroots" community support:

When you get the municipality, when you get the chief of police involved, in those other communities, they never did that. Like in Toronto, as an example, they didn't have the community coming up. I spoke in Oshawa one time because of our casino, when they were trying to get a casino going in Oshawa. That had to be about 1996. And again talking about the positive effects of the jobs, and that was basically my point was on jobs, because they were going through a downturn also. But their police were present and they were speaking negative about it. That's why I say, 'If you get the community involved at the grassroots level...' and you get the players involved that are thinking of the community, like when you get the police involved, when you get the city council involved, get community groups onside, the labour movement to come onside. After you



go and talk to them, they are not onsite at the beginning. We talked to many groups within the community trying to establish our rationale, why we think the casino will be good for the community, emphasizing the fact of jobs ...

Along with the ability to get key stakeholders'—business, labour, and political representatives—support, the community signing onto this project was also attributed to the economic downturn in the area. Commenting on this, Jim, a Windsor NDP representative, says, “We were looking for whatever ways to create jobs. It was an employment situation.” Barry, a Windsor media representative, states:

I was there at the debates, and people knew, ‘Oh this is risky.’ Yes, it’s risky, but it’s worth the risk. We need the jobs. The jobs thing trumped everything. [...] I remember being at public debates where the only people opposing it were a couple of reverends and a priest, and couple of mothers against drunk driving types, and there would only be a handful of them. And they were listened to, but then they were just steamrolled. People just didn’t care about their point of view, and said, ‘No, we want the jobs, we want to do this. Sit down.’

Tom, a Windsor labour leader, also comments on the urgency of getting a casino due to Windsor’s dependency on automotive and the economic downturn, saying:

So [Dave] Cooke [Windsor-Riverside NDP Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP)] convinced Bob Rae, and Cooke did his homework, he went and talked to all the stakeholders first, and said, ‘Listen, I’m not doing this to get my ass kicked politically, I’m doing it because Windsor is in serious trouble.’ We relied totally on manufacturing. And this is a good opportunity for us. So, all the parties got in.

Based on Windsor stakeholders’ contemporary accounts, the initiative of Windsor stakeholders, with the support of the community, resulted in the establishment of a casino. John, a former Windsor NDP representative, discusses Windsor stakeholders’ ability to pursue and acquire a casino by pressuring the provincial government as ‘unusual’:

The municipal pressure was unusual and how well it was received, I would say, was quite unusual. And it still is to this day. I can’t think of any other project where there was that kind of political influence coming from the municipal level and being ultimately well received by the provincial. Nothing jumps to mind. Any other ones were always infrastructure, where there was knowledge of how to go about selling that idea.

I find, however, the discourse of Windsor stakeholders as able to pursue their interests with the support of the community offers only part of the story. Through comparing contemporary accounts by Windsor stakeholders with accounts in the local newspaper, I reveal a more complex account of the power dynamics behind acquiring Casino Windsor. While Windsor

stakeholders were initially acting in an entrepreneurial capacity to acquire a casino, an examination of the local newspaper reveals that provincial government interests eventually co-opted this initiative. Indeed, Windsor stakeholders who were initially pursuing the casino became increasingly powerless during the casino acquisition process. Put simply, the *Windsor Star*'s coverage of the acquisition of Casino Windsor illuminates a different constellation of power dynamics.

#### *A Tale of Municipal Entrepreneurialism*

*I think Windsor, I think the mayor of the day, and others lobbied for the casino. I think they wanted it. I imagine that at the time, they saw it as some sort of economic diversification for Windsor and so I think, they actively developed a strategy to lobby for casino gaming. – Ellen, Windsor City Council executive official*

With the rejection of casino gambling in a referendum vote in Detroit in 1988,<sup>58</sup> the *Windsor Star* reports that Windsor's hope of becoming a "bedroom community" for the gamblers looking for safer and cheaper accommodations across the US border were dashed (Beneteau 1988). Windsor's political and business interests viewed the potential hospitality and service spillover from Detroit casinos as a significant economic opportunity for Windsor (Ferguson 1988). Despite Detroit casinos not materializing, then Windsor Mayor, John Millson, announced the desire to pursue riverboat casino gaming for Windsor. The Liberal provincial government (1985-1990), however, did not support the creation of casinos in Windsor or the rest of Ontario. As Calvin, a former Windsor Liberal representative, recounts during his 2014 interview, "John Millson, when he was mayor, floated the idea of a river boat casino. But it was never taken seriously at the time either locally or by the government."

This sentiment changed, however, when the NDP—the most "left" party in Canada—was, for the first time, elected to represent Ontario in 1990. Windsor's casino lobby, which now included business, labour, and political interests, again pursued bringing a casino to Windsor. In May 1992, local developer Bill Docherty and a Windsor Member of Provincial Parliament

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<sup>58</sup>Coleman Young, the mayor of Detroit, had long supported casino gambling as a solution for high unemployment in Detroit. A referendum again defeated the proposal by an almost 2-1 margin, the third time in 12 years. After the referendum defeat, Young did not pursue the issue with the Michigan legislature. Nonetheless, the idea of Detroit 'eventually' establishing casino(s) was used to justify Windsor's casino. As NDP MP Dave Cooke said to the *Windsor Star*, "I guess we have a choice of whether ... we want to do it or we want people from Windsor to go to Detroit" (More 1992).

(MPP, NDP Windsor – Riverside) Dave Cooke, who was also Municipal Affairs Minister, submitted a market analysis and business plan to the provincial government. The plan included the form the casino would take, which was modeled on Winnipeg’s Crystal Casino, operating through a Crown corporation and managed by a joint provincial and municipal board.<sup>59</sup> It would also be a small Monte Carlo-style casino with a dress code while not having alcohol within the facility.<sup>60</sup> The employment it would provide would be provincially staffed (i.e., Crown employees/public servants), with the average worker earning a salary of \$41,500 CAD.<sup>61</sup> Like other public servants in Ontario, this workplace would undoubtedly be unionized. It would also be a no-tipping environment where, if customers would like to tip, gratuities would be donated to local charities. The proposed project also included a larger sportsplex development attached to the casino.<sup>62</sup> In essence, the casino was to be a smaller piece of a larger development project in Windsor’s downtown.

While proposing a casino to the community and the province, those seeking a casino for Windsor emphasized the importance of the venture being owned and operated by the province and municipality rather than being privately run. As local developer and founding initiator of the casino project, Bill Docherty, said to the *Windsor Star*, “It should be run by government and staffed by unionized, government employees with full benefits” (Vander Doelen 1992b). Then mayor, Mike Hurst, also stressed the importance of government ownership, stating, “The government has to be there to run (these) exercises, just like Manitoba” (The Windsor Star 1992c). Indeed, for the casino to remain ‘above board’—in terms of limiting corruption and crime—public ownership and management was perceived as essential. Certainly, public ownership and operation signaling that these would be well-paid, government jobs increased the appeal to the community.

Joint provincial and municipal ownership and operation was viewed as increasing the guarantee that a large portion of the profits from the development would remain in the

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<sup>59</sup> Being viewed as a success, Windsor’s proposed casino was based on what was called, “The Manitoba precedent,” the Crystal Casino, which was the first permanent government-owned casino in the western hemisphere. This casino was also created by a provincial NDP government.

<sup>60</sup> This contrasted with “a glitzy Las Vegas or Atlantic City version” (Burnside and Brennan 1992).

<sup>61</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, the original casino plan was modeled on the Winnipeg Crystal Casino which was owned and operated by the Manitoba provincial government (which, at the time, was also led by the NDP).

<sup>62</sup> Additional pieces of the proposal included: Minimum age requirement, 21; No credit extended to players; Only one casino per community to preserve the character of those communities and to prevent them from looking like Las Vegas and; Hours of operation, noon to two a.m. daily (Burnside and Brennan 1992).

community. As noted in an October 1992 article in the *Windsor Star*, public ownership and operation was a major factor in City Council and the community entertaining the proposal to host a casino:

Under his [Docherty's] plan, the high-stakes casino would be operated by the provincial government, much like the Manitoba Lotteries Foundation's operation of the highly successful Crystal Casino at Winnipeg's Hotel Fort Garry. Heavy government involvement is seen as the key element in selling the idea to both City Council and the public. 'It should be run by the government and the profits plowed back into the community,' Patricia Renaud said Sunday while working at the Classic Laundry Shop on Howard Avenue (Hornberger 1992).

The *Windsor Star* (More 1993) quoted a prominent community labour leader, Gary Parent, as echoing this sentiment, "Our absolute position is that it (the casino) should be completely government-run. Anything short of that, in our opinion, is not in the best interest of the city."

With the creation of the initial proposal, support from the broader community was mobilized from key community stakeholders—business, labour, and political—which began the provincial lobbying effort to receive a casino. These various interest groups were not only important in lobbying provincial government but were also crucial in creating a climate of casino support in Windsor in terms of gauging and grooming public opinion. John, a former Windsor NDP representative, states:

Bill Docherty came up with this idea that he needed to be able to build a casino that would be attached to the arena, a facility. And I said, when he came to see me, 'I am not opposed to it, but we really need to gauge public opinion and city council's opinion.' And, so, he did some of that work and city council was very interested. Because the original concept, it was going to be a relatively small, European-style casino. Which would mean, you would not be able to go in with blue jeans and a t-shirt. So that's how the city had been sort of prepared.

Indeed, in an attempt to gain stakeholder and broader community support, local interests, in particular Bill Docherty, conducted studies to assess the community impact of hosting a European-style casino. Mike, a former local labour leader, reflects on this effort, stating:

Docherty had hired two professors. [...] They were doing the work at the academic level. So, they were looking at the impact on the community, both positive and negative. Looking at problem gambling was certainly a factor, but the economic plus looking at what spinoffs would be in other sectors. [...] He's the guy that went around the community, the different groups, us being one the labour groups, but he went around to other groups as well. He's the one that fielded the questions, he's the one in conjunction with us [CAW] and other people went to City Council to get the city onside [...] it was his stimulus that started this whole discussion.

Windsor stakeholders also recall the importance of gaining the support of the CAW as central to gaining broader community buy-in since a significant part of the Windsor community were CAW members. The CAW's support, and, by default, the support of the communities labour interests, was also tied to the ability to grow its membership. If the casino jobs were to be unionized jobs (i.e., CAW jobs), the CAW would support the effort to acquire a casino. Indeed, with the late 1980s and early 1990s recession, along with the forecasted impact of NAFTA on the highly unionized automotive sector, the CAW was looking to diversify and increase its membership. During a 2014 interview, Tom, a Windsor labour leader, reflects on the importance of labour interests—in particular the CAW and the Windsor and District Labour Council—in fostering broader community support, saying:

Our local union was very much involved. The president at the time was Larry Bauer, he was the president of Local 444, and he was involved in the planning committee that brought business together, labour, not for profit groups, obviously the elected government, which was a New Democratic government at the time, together to look at the idea of a casino [...] So both of those guys, Larry Bauer and Gary Parent were an integral part of the community committee put together to look at the feasibility of the casino.

With the support of the labour movement, it was also implied that the casino would ensure the interests of the community, particularly in terms of providing quality employment. As Mike, a former Windsor labour leader, notes:

He [Docherty] knew that if he couldn't get the labour movement onside, it was a no go. Because at that time in our community's history, we had a lot of influence in relation to things being done within the city. Because of the economy in Windsor at the time—it wasn't good, there was high unemployment—and we needed some kind of stimulus to get the economy going. So, after a lot of soul searching amongst ourselves, because of some of the side effects that could possibly come, we decided that it would be best, if it's coming to Windsor, that we would be part of that group. [...] By being integral [the labour movement] in the initial framework, we tried to create parameters around the casino, to secure the community as much as possible. [...] Our purpose was trying to get good paying jobs into the community [...] and at the time it was an NDP government, so I think that we had some influence with the government at the time, because labour supported the NDP. So that's where we started. We needed jobs, we needed a stimulus. We wanted higher paying jobs, we wanted to make sure that they weren't minimum wage jobs. [...] I went to the Ontario Federation of Labour, I was the Vice President at the time, got their endorsement for it. Cause I wanted to make sure that the rest of the labour movement understood why we were doing it.

Clearly, from this perspective, having the labour movement's support, particularly the CAW's support, at this point in Windsor's history was crucial in garnering broader community support. The CAW's involvement in the initial proposal and lobbying effort stressed the importance of bringing well-paying jobs to a community in need, which "after soul searching" outweighed the potential social costs.

Windsor stakeholders constructed a casino plan, created broader community support, and actively sought out provincial government approval. This groundswell of community support and community buy-in (i.e., no resistance) was created under the auspices of the initial proposal. The proposed casino would take the form of a small casino, which would be owned and operated under a provincial-municipal partnership and be part of a larger development project. However, the form the casino would, in fact, take happened to be quite different than the initial community-backed plan.

#### *The NDP Getting Onboard with Casinos*

*And, believe me, I've had it right up to here with people looking down their noses at Windsor. For too many years, Windsor has got the short end of the stick. The money always ran out at Chatham. So what if people living in the city were still on septic tanks and the schools needed fixing? The Tories didn't care and the Liberals cared only slightly more. Now don't think I'm fooled for a minute by the attention the New Democrats are paying Windsor. They are simply feathering the nest so their members won't get the boot come the next election. Anyway, the reason why things are getting done isn't nearly as important as the fact Windsor is getting its long-overdue fair share of the provincial pie. – Brennan (1992), reporter for the Windsor Star*

*The final decision on the size, location and operation of the casino is expected by the end of this month. Only then will there be a concrete estimate of the number of jobs the project will create. Consumer Minister Marilyn Churley has said the government is considering a casino gaming area of between 6,000 and 9,300 square metres. The 7,339-square-metre Harrah's casino in Las Vegas employs about 500 in the casino and 2,900 in the entire casino-hotel-entertainment complex. The "European-style" casino in Winnipeg employs about 180 in a casino that takes up 1,579 square metres. The government has yet to announce whether the Windsor casino will be government-run or contracted out to a private operator. It has also not indicated whether the casino employees will be government employees. – Cross (1993), reporter for the Windsor Star*

As a NDP stronghold for decades, Windsor stakeholders and community members felt that non-NDP Ontario provincial governments long neglected awarding funding to their

community. For instance, a *Windsor Star* (1992a) article stated that Windsor's local economy and infrastructure "had suffered from 42 years of Tory [Progressive Conservative Party] neglect." As Calvin, a former Windsor Liberal representative, put it, "with our voting styles we are basically an old protest place. And it doesn't work." With the NDP elected to provincial leadership (1990-1995), there was hope that Windsor would be given a long awaited provincial investment, taking the shape of a casino. Bill, a Windsor realty representative and long involved in the gaming industry, also comments on the NDP provincial investment in a casino and its connection to Windsor historically being denied provincial funding. He states during a 2014 interview:

The NDP had seen an extraction of, let's say, funding, from provincial resources and maybe federal too, from this [Windsor] area. We're actually penalized for the way we vote around here for quite a number of years, for 25-30 years. We've always had problems getting capital here. So, being penalized that way, when the NDP got in, they decided that they would make up for the whole 25 years of loss for Windsor, and did, and struck in any direction they could to ensure that Windsor would be enriched by their term in government. [...] That could have been the thinking behind the drive for the decision, rapidly to get capital into Windsor invested, that the government didn't have to find.

Jeff, a Windsor tourism representative, also echoes this sentiment but reframes it as relating to the city's self-image issue, stating:

It was like, 'Hey, we're good enough and we've won something!' Because sometimes we have this impression or feeling that when we're down at the lower end of the province, the southernmost city in the country, that we're forgotten about, and that everything starts at London and goes towards the GTA [Greater Toronto Area].

With pressure from Windsor's lobby, the NDP provincial government, at first hesitant with Windsor's proposal, needed little convincing after realizing the possible revenues casinos could provide for the provincial coffers. As Jim, a Windsor NDP representative involved in bringing the casino to Windsor explains, the NDP Finance Minister soon realized the revenues casinos could bring to the province.<sup>63</sup> He reflects:

I remember the discussions we had with the Finance Minister. He was initially opposed, again I think along the lines of worrying about compulsive gambling. Initially, because he hadn't done the analysis of the economic benefits, not just of the community but to the province. [...] He was the one we had to ultimately convince. And Bob Rae was basically doing whatever Dave Cooke wanted on this issue. Then the Finance Minister was sold once he actually had the financial analysis, and realized how much more it was going to bring in. I mean we were talking \$4-6 hundred million, up to a billion dollars into the

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<sup>63</sup> Laughren announced his support for the casino in the April 1992 provincial budget.

provincial coffers each year. And that was just the direct money coming from the casino. That wasn't taking into account all the income and sales taxes that they were going to pick up from this extra money flowing to the economy. And this was always a factor, 80 cents for every dollar was coming from the US side, it was totally new money coming into this economy that would not have come otherwise.

With the NDP elected on the promise of Keynesian social spending, and with Ontario running a large deficit, casino development became a welcome option provincially. As Tom, a Windsor labour leader, states, "The purpose of Casino Windsor, again from a government perspective, was to generate badly needed revenue needed for public services." Relating to the provincial deficit, Barry, a Windsor media representative, also states, "He [Laughren] only did it to plug the gigantic holes in his budget." Calvin, the former Windsor Liberal representative, also comments on the newly elected government being open to the casino due to its financial woes, saying:

At that time the Rae government, of course they were experiencing a horrible economic time and were really in the ditch politically. The business community had no use for that government. [Rae] came to office just as the economy was literally collapsing. It was a really bad downturn, especially in manufacturing. It was relatively unique in Ontario, the depth of it. Which caused him a lot of political grief. [...] The Rae government needed money desperately and they were raising taxes. They were in deep political trouble, they knew they couldn't raise more taxes, and they were still spending. They were the first NDP government, and Floyd's [Laughren] first budget he got up and said that they were going to be Keynesians. And they just blew a hole in their numbers. It wasn't sustainable. So, they were open to the idea. Believe it or not, to find one source of a billion dollars in a government budget, it's hard. The only tax that is robust enough to get you a billion dollars in one increase is with the HST [Harmonized Sales Tax] or in those days it would have been the PST [Provincial Sales Tax]. Because you can tax corporations all you want, there are not that many of them.

Casino development would function to raise funds without raising taxes, allowing for continued social spending.<sup>64</sup> John, a former Windsor NDP representative, also suggests that the deficit combined with the NDP being first-time elected provincial representatives allowed them to entertain unconventional methods of governing, like legalizing casinos.

### *Throwing the Cards in the Air*

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<sup>64</sup> The bringing of casinos to Ontario can also be understood as occurring during a supposed 'investment embargo' in Ontario as a backlash to the electing of the NDP—Canada's 'left-wing' party—to provincial government (Caplan 2010).



The NDP provincial government was now ready to legalize casino gaming, but whether Windsor would be chosen as a site, let alone the first pilot site, was now being questioned. In fact, the provincial government listed several potential sites. As stated in the *Windsor Star* (1992b):

According to the Queen's Park rumour mill, the six sites under consideration include two in Toronto, one in the Niagara region, one in Sault Ste. Marie, one in Ottawa and one in Windsor or Sarnia. The or, however, does make us nervous. If anything, Windsor should be at the top of the list – after all, it seems to be Docherty's brainchild we are talking about.

Despite Windsor stakeholders initiating the process of casino legalization with the provincial government—offering a market assessment of the regional gaming market and creating broad community support—whether the provincial government would choose Windsor to receive a casino was uncertain as of April 1992. The Ontario government proposed multiple potential sites, naming other economically depressed cities like Windsor. The provincial government named cities like Sarnia and Niagara Falls, which respectively had unemployment rates of 34.9 percent and 10.6 percent in 1991, as other potential host communities (Canadian Census Analyzer 2014). This altered the leverage the Windsor stakeholders had in negotiating the terms and conditions upon which the casino would be brought into Windsor (unemployment rate of 13 percent in 1991)—if it would be brought at all. For instance, when discussing the proportion the City of Windsor should demand of the casino revenues, it was suggested in the *Windsor Star* that, “There’s always the fear a standoff will make Consumer Minister Marilyn Churley move the casino somewhere else—Sarnia and Niagara Falls would dearly love it—and such an unspoken threat hasn’t gone unnoticed” (The Windsor Star 1992a).

This change, I argue, was crucial in the provincial government leveraging its bargaining power over Windsor stakeholders and was key in substantially reducing Windsor’s leverage in negotiating the terms and conditions upon which the casino would be brought into Windsor. The terms of the debate within Windsor also shifted from being concerned over what form the casino would take (i.e., scope and ownership) to concern over whether Windsor would receive a casino at all. Discussion and/or criticism concerning the type of casino Windsor would host was then recast as threatening the chance of Windsor receiving the casino in the first place. Consequently, the city took on the attitude of ‘take whatever we can get.’

This slippage in Windsor's leverage then resulted in Windsor stakeholders expressing gratitude for receiving the casino, no matter what form it took. For instance, once Windsor was named the 'lucky' host community, Henderson (1993b) in the *Windsor Star*, stated, "Those who quibble over the petty details should stop and offer a moment's respectful silence for other hard luck Ontario communities—like Niagara Falls and Sault Ste. Marie—that needed and wanted this project every bit as much as Windsor."

With the news from the provincial government that Windsor was to receive the first pilot casino in Ontario, to be located in the Windsor Art Gallery, there was an elated reaction from Windsor interest groups.<sup>65</sup> As Vander Doelen (1993c) recounted in the *Windsor Star*, "'This is the biggest thing since the automobile for Windsor,' said a beaming Councilor Dwight Duncan. 'We're going to beat the Americans at this.'" Experiencing a recession along with the anticipated consequences of NAFTA on automotive manufacturing looming, the proposed casino investment signified economic viability. As a *Windsor Star* (1992d) article espoused:

To fully understand the impact of the recession on Windsor's political leaders you had to be at the Cleary International Centre Tuesday [October 6, 1992] morning. You had to see the sheer relief in Mayor Mike Hurst's eyes as he announced this city had been chosen as the first—and only—site for a new casino pilot project in Ontario. You had to appreciate that Municipal Affairs Minister Dave Cooke, who clearly used his cabinet muscle to lobby hard on his hometown's behalf, had delivered more than he dared hope for and knew it. For business and labour representatives, who greeted the announcement with two extraordinary standing ovations, this wasn't just a precedent-setting decision that happened to pique some international attention on a slow news day. This was the first tangible sign that there might be light at the end of the recession tunnel.

By spring 1993, as stated in an editorial piece in the *Windsor Star*, it was clear that the casino being given to Windsor had changed, "a provincial committee is calling the shots" (Henderson 1993a). An editorial piece in the *Windsor Star* (Diegel 1993) also commented:

The casino now being proposed is completely unlike the small European-style government-run one proposed last year by Bill Docherty in connection with the sportsplex, and endorsed wholeheartedly by [Windsor] City Council. It is time to

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<sup>65</sup> When the government announced Windsor had been selected for the pilot project, Marilyn Churley – the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations – said that city was chosen because it is the hardest hit of Ontario's border communities. The large population in the Detroit area, from which the casino can draw visitors, was also cited (The Sault Star 1992).

admit we are in a whole new race; it is time to admit the city is no longer in the driver's seat.

After the provincial government announced casinos would be coming to Ontario, and Windsor would be hosting the pilot project, the initial plans had been transformed. Because a larger casino could generate more revenue, the Ontario government replaced the idea of a small Monte Carlo-style casino with a Las Vegas-style casino.<sup>66</sup> The *Windsor Star's* Vander Doelen (1993c) stated:

The permanent casino will be [...] larger at 6,968 square metres, with a 300-room hotel and theatres and bars and restaurants—a \$200-million enormity, compared to the original proposal. [...] His [Docherty's] idea was to append a 2,600-square-metre casino to the arena. The casino shouldn't be any larger, he argued, saying that 'too much chocolate isn't good for you either. You eat too much of it and you get sick.'

In addition, due to the new size of the casino, the province also announced that a private operator would be needed to effectively manage the site.<sup>67</sup> The casino was no longer envisioned as owned and managed by a joint provincial and municipal board but was now planned to be managed by a private casino operator. As Henderson (1993a) of the *Windsor Star* reported, "The problem, of course, is that the deficit-plagued [NDP] government desperately needs the staggering sums of money that studies show a large casino can generate. But its top bureaucrats have concluded that expertise in running a big, successful casino must be imported." Vander Doelen (1993b) of the *Windsor Star*, commenting on the shift in size and scope of the casino, stated that the impetus for an increase in the size of the casino came from the Finance Minister's desire to obtain more revenues:

The most important change of heart, some observers say, was at Queen's Park. The eyes of Ontario Finance Minister Floyd Laughren likely opened as wide as saucers when bureaucrats told him how much money a 'real' casino could put in provincial coffers. 'There is no doubt the real impetus for this was in Laughren's office,' said a former government insider who did not want to be identified. 'No one else would have done it.' Soon, the province's casino project team was floating trial balloons about the size. 'Would you rather have 1,200 jobs or 2,500 jobs?' private focus groups were asked. With jobs and new tax assessment as bait, no one chose the smaller option. By February 1993, the original proposal had become much larger. And Docherty, who orchestrated the

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<sup>66</sup> The new plans included: Hours of operation from 11 a.m. to four a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends; the dress code will be casual; the permanent casino will employ 2,500; no alcohol allowed in gaming areas, but alcohol will be served in restaurants in the casino building (Consumer Minister Marilyn Churley has said she's prepared to reconsider the alcohol restriction if necessary).

<sup>67</sup> The provincial government announced a private operator would manage the Windsor casino beginning March 13, 1993.

political pressure needed to get gambling approved in the first place, was already being shouldered out.

Casino corporations also began lobbying both provincial and municipal interests once the province signaled its interest in legalizing casinos. The *Windsor Star* (Vander Doelen 1992b) also reported that private lobbying began immediately after the Ontario government announced it would develop casinos:

Several national and international groups with access to hundreds of millions of dollars are lobbying the city and the province for ‘a piece of the action,’ he [Docherty] said. The lobbying that’s going to go on out there—for a thing that’s going to turn over hundreds of millions of dollars per year—will test the mettle of the various ministers whose departments are in charge. The lobbying, which Docherty says has already begun, ‘is fierce, and it’s going to be fierce until they decide (the casino) is going to be government run.’

Again, Vander Doelen (1992d) reported, “‘You wouldn’t believe the pressure they are under already,’ one member of [city] council said, ‘There are all kinds of groups lobbying them to go with a privately-run facility.’” Vander Doelen (1992a) also reported:

Consequently, about half a dozen large corporate would-be operators of the casino have been busy lobbying, both at Queen’s Park and in Windsor. This week, the vice-president of gaming for Harrah’s, a major US-based casino company, paid a courtesy call on [Windsor Mayor] Hurst. He made similar calls on Churley [Consumer Minister], Ontario Finance Minister Lloyd Laughren, and members of the Casino Project Team. Harrah’s, a \$1-billion-per-year company, runs casinos in all five gambling markets in the US and also has operations in the UK.

### *Out of the Driver’s Seat*

Ultimately, the provincial government, to bolster faltering revenues, decided Casino Windsor would be a Las Vegas-style casino in the form of a public-private partnership rather than government owned and operated.<sup>68</sup> On December 3, 1993, the provincial government announced Windsor Casino Ltd. would manage Casino Windsor. This was a partnership between Circus Circus, Caesars Entertainment, and Hilton Hotels. This consortium was ironically referred

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<sup>68</sup> Along with increasing the contribution to provincial revenues, the decision to create a public-private partnership was justified on competitive grounds. As Vander Doelen (1993e) reported in the *Windsor Star*: “Jay Kaufman, secretary of the treasury board, Deputy Minister of Finance, and one of four members of the selection committee—made it clear the choice was made with Detroit competition in mind. ‘There will be economic shakedowns in the industry,’ Kaufman told the press conference. ‘But this is a consortium of enormous economic capacity. It is a group of powerful, enormously successful operators. Our view is that there will be competition and this is a group that can withstand that competition very well.’ Churley (Consumer Minister) said the trio was chosen because it is ‘the best qualified to meet the objectives of the government,’ which are: job creation, new revenue for the province, new development in Windsor, increased tourism in Ontario, and the creation of a new industry for the province.”

to as the “Big Three,” mirroring the dominance of the Big Three US automakers—Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler—in the region. Opting for a private operating firm, however, was reportedly viewed less than positively from fellow NDP representatives. As Henderson (1993a) reported in the *Windsor Star*:

Many New Democrats grudgingly accepted casino gambling with the assurance that the casinos would be operated as Crown corporations. They expected government-run gambling based on the Manitoba precedent. They believed they were promised a made-in-Ontario project. [...] Conservatives and Liberals would have tremendous fun with this odd couple, a socialist government that advocates economic nationalism linking arms with a swashbuckling example of American free enterprise in pursuit of big profits. [...] ‘But when this comes back to cabinet as a totally different package, I’m not at all sure there’ll be such a hands-off attitude,’ said the source. He foresees deep divisions within [the NDP] cabinet and bitter debates behind closed doors.

Like the NDP cabinet, the small business community in Windsor also expressed concern about the newly revealed project becoming their neighbour. Hall (1993) of the *Windsor Star* pointed to this concern:

And this casino will take over the city. It may, in fact, eclipse it, since the facility already promises to be more self-contained than many expected. It’s tempting to suggest downtown merchants are engaging in their usual whining when they express concern about all the things that will be tucked into that permanent casino. But when you see the package you’ll likely agree they have every reason to be nervous. Tennis courts, jogging tracks, meeting rooms, restaurants, bars, lounges, a 1,000-seat supper club, a ballroom, a fast-food court so gamblers can catch a quick bite and return to the tables ... all designed to lure people into the casino. And keep them there.

Echoing this concern, Susan, a Windsor small business representative, discusses during our 2014 interview the difficulty of small businesses competing with the casino as an eating, gaming, and entertainment center, stating:

The downtown businesses are competing directly with the casino and it’s a frustration for many of them. And, if anything, the casino is direct competition to their place of business. And they will tell you their frustrations. This is a private company on a provincial property and that they are not required to pay property taxes or levees that they do and that they are getting an unfair advantage over small business. And that hurts their small businesses because the casino can bring in as many talents as they like and run as many operations as they like and if those operations are unsuccessful then the province will prop them up. Whereas, if you are unsuccessful in your own business, it’s your fault. So, there’s that frustration. And, of course, they are very vocal which does not help to build relationships, right [*laughs*]. It is very political. They [small businesses] could market themselves a whole lot better. That is a challenge that they have, but they don’t have the financial wherewithal to do that. The casino is perceived to be keeping its guest

and its patrons within its walls. They are in the business of doing that. That is the perception out there.

Susan's comments reflect the contrast between the small-scale casino based on broader community development versus the large, self-contained, public-private venture the province created. It also illustrates that 'community buy-in' then and now seems less than absolute.

Despite this change—from a small casino to a mega-casino, from a government owned and operated to a public-private partnership—the employment and spinoffs anticipated from this larger casino trumped all other concerns. For instance, an editorial piece in the *Windsor Star* (Henderson 1993b) argued:

It took our speedy naysayers all of five minutes to begin bellyaching following Monday's formal unveiling of plans for a spectacular—make that drop-dead beautiful—\$375-million Windsor casino development. It's too self-contained, the downtown handwringers moaned, pointing to a proposed 600-seat coffee shop, 400-seat food court, and 1,000-seat dinner theatre. Visions of a monstrous 'black hole' that will suck every last loonie out of downtown shops and dining establishments were summoned as they vowed to demand fewer restaurant seats and less retail space in the casino complex. Amazing, isn't it? They drop one of the most powerful tourism attractions on the planet in little old Windsor's lap and all some folks can see is doom and despair and a threat to their cherished small-town way of doing business. Sorry. [...] Because this is as good as it has ever been and probably as good as it will ever get for Windsor. Announcements of \$375-million projects don't come along every day and ones creating 12,000 direct and indirect jobs are pathetically hard to find anywhere on this planet. Windsor, with this deal, is no longer a shrinking regional outpost and a one-industry town. [...] Think about it. A blue-collar city that has long been ridiculed and belittled by outsiders (and more than a few self-loathing insiders) now finds itself, even if only for a little while, an object of envy. [...] To those finding fault with this plan? To those worrying about their ability to compete? I say give your head a shake. [...] They're talking \$220 million annually in casino wages and salaries and purchases. They're talking 2,500 jobs at the permanent casino. Forget the patrons. The employees alone represent a potential downtown gold mine. Meanwhile, downtown has been handed a gift, a three-year head start in developing loyal clientele while the temporary casino is housed in the art gallery with its limited restaurant space.

Windsor stakeholders' conception of a small casino that would be owned and operated under a provincial-municipal partnership turned into a public-private megaproject. The provincial government transformed what was originally sold to the Windsor community into a Nevada model of casino development (i.e., resort casino). Windsor was essentially removed from the 'driver's seat' regarding the terms and conditions upon which the casino would be brought into the community. The "Manitoba Precedent"—the importance of the casino being owned and operated by a joint provincial and municipal board and furnished with government employees—

was swept aside. Now, a Las Vegas consortium would employ Windsorites, and a majority of their income would rely on gratuities.

At the outset, the casino was drafted as a smaller part of a larger, more holistic downtown revitalization initiative. Prior to provincial intervention, this initial model was continually juxtaposed in the local news media to the private model of casino development—like Atlantic City—which was framed as unsustainable. From being duly against the proposal, once potential revenues were calculated, provincial interests quickly shifted to a ‘the bigger the better’ stance on casino development while taking on private operators from Nevada was justified due to the newly proposed size of the casino and anticipated competition. From small to huge, with big private players involved, the casino could act as a lifeline to relieve Windsor of its economic woes, proving that Windsor had a “future and isn’t doomed to the irreversible decline with the automotive industry” (Henderson 1992). Despite its packaging transforming, Windsor stakeholders saw the casino as a “gift” to a desperate city, which would welcome any form of employment and investment (Hall 1992).

With an unemployment rate of 11.5 percent in 1993, a bigger casino meant more jobs while being privately operated meant being more competitive with the rival Detroit casinos on the horizon (Gower 1996). As the *Windsor Star* reported, labour interests in the community saw the increase in size and scope of the casino as increasing employment opportunities (Vander Doelen 1993b). While labour interests did critique the province’s decision to use a private operator, a spokesperson from the labour council, when speaking to *Windsor Star* reporter Vander Doelen (1993d), made certain to add “[...] although I want to stress we are not opposed to the casino coming to Windsor.” Vander Doelen (1993b) also commented on labour interest support:

Local labour leaders decided Windsor needed casino jobs—lots of them—to diversify the economy and reduce an unofficial unemployment record of near 20 percent. The city’s hunger for jobs and profit soon diminished Docherty’s influence. Although he fought like a tiger to win control of the candy store, eventually he was pushed to the sidelines.

Despite the impetus to acquire a casino initially suturing together divergent local interests, the province co-opting the project fragmented Windsor stakeholders’ alliance. The local developer, Bill Docherty, who spearheaded the casino project was removed from the process as the province refocused the project towards provincial interests.

The contemporary accounts of Windsor stakeholders stress the ability of Windsor stakeholders to acquire a casino in the interest of and with the support of the broader community. Missing from these accounts is a discussion of how the plan was altered and that Windsor stakeholders were removed from decision making. The only Windsor stakeholder to critique the transformed version of the casino focuses on the province bringing in a private operator and how it affected the proportion of revenues the city receives. Jim, the Windsor NDP representative, states:

We looked at a number of other ways of flowing money. Initially, I spent some time in Montreal at the casino there, and studied and was much more interested in following that model. It probably would have meant less revenue because the advantage big [private] casinos have is they move their client base around. [...] But I think any of the loss we would have taken there, if we were to manage it ourselves, the money would have stayed here as opposed to going back to Vegas. [...] The management corporation would have been owned by the city. I think that the casino itself, it was important that the province owned it. But management would have been here. And we would have negotiated a similar type of contract that the big corporations did. So that was one area where additional money would have stayed in this community. I mean there's a big profit margin in that, that's not just wages, I mean what they [private management] were getting – I don't know if this is public, I think it's public – the first contract was, I think it was \$40 million is what they [private employer] got the first year. And in terms of what that cost them, in terms of salaries, and other expenses, direct expenses... probably substantially less, probably no more than a quarter of that. They were making like a \$30 million profit. So that would have all stayed here. And ideally the city would have been using that to develop recreational, entertainment, tourism, venues, and plans, instead of all going into provincial coffers and to Vegas.

Jim criticizes the shift away from municipal level stakeholders managing the operation, claiming that this would have resulted in more direct benefits for the municipality and arguably, the community, beyond wages. From this perspective, the shift towards a private operator impacted the proportion of revenues remaining within the community and whether the casino would be part of a larger development plan.

All Windsor stakeholders I interviewed acknowledged the large amount of revenue the casino generates for the province. As John, a former Windsor NDP representative, states, “Casino Windsor alone was sending a billion dollars to the province.” From the casino opening in 1994 to 1998, the city of Windsor did not receive a hosting payment. In 1998, the city received a hosting payment of approximately \$1.7 million. From 1999-2008, the city received a



hosting payment of \$2.6 million annually. From 2009-2012, the city received a hosting payment of \$3 million. Indeed, from 1998-2012, the hosting fee for the City of Windsor during the casino's most profitable period was a fixed amount. The Ontario provincial government introduced a new formula in 2013 which creates hosting fee consistency across the province's casinos.<sup>69</sup> The new formula, which no longer includes a fixed rate, now ties the proportion of revenues the City of Windsor receives to gaming revenue. While the city received a higher hosting fee in 2015—\$7.6 million compared to \$3 million—the total amount the city of Windsor received from the casino is lower than previous years as a result of its property taxes declining—from \$12-13 million annually from 2003-2008 to \$5.5 million in 2015<sup>70</sup>—and policing fees, which the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) once added as an extra contribution, stopped.<sup>71</sup> At its peak, Casino Windsor's gross gaming revenues in 2000 were \$838.5 million. Currently, in 2014, its gross gaming revenues were \$229.5 million. In an attempt by the casino to expand its market, there has also been a shift and expansion into entertainment options—concerts, live shows, etc.—to attract and maintain patrons; the city, however, does not receive a proportion of entertainment-based revenues (Office of the Auditor General 2014).

### *Conclusion*

Despite the 1993 Casino Act stipulating that casino developments attend to the “public good,” the case of Casino Windsor shows that provincial interests ultimately pursued its revenue generating interests over local-municipal interests. This chapter enriches the literature on the power dynamics behind casino development. Some suggest that casinos represent a state-down imposition on struggling communities (Calvano and Andersson 2010; Klassen and Cosgrave 2009) while others claim that casinos offer an opportunity for municipal stakeholders and

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<sup>69</sup> This formula equaled:

- 5.25 percent on first \$65 million of all electronic-game net revenue
- Three percent on next \$135 million of electronic-game net revenue
- 2.5 percent on next \$300 million of electronic-game net revenue
- 0.5 percent on electronic-game net revenue above \$500 million
- Four percent on live table-game net revenue (Office of the Auditor General of Ontario 2014)

<sup>70</sup> The municipality was unable to provide tax information prior to 2003 due to changing financial systems in 2003.

<sup>71</sup> Beginning in 1998, the police payment was approximately \$1.8 million per year. In addition, the employer also directed \$300,000 annually to Windsor's Downtown Business Improvement Association. This also ended in 2014. However, while the municipality is still channeling dollars to police services from the percentage they receive of gaming revenues, dollars are no longer being channeled to the BIA.

communities to pursue their growth interests (Felsenstein et al. 1999). I complicate the existing literature on casino development by showing, in the case of Casino Windsor, it was both. Casino acquisition was neither emblematic of state/provincial powers imposing such initiatives on an economically struggling community nor a “grassroots” initiative symbolizing a city’s ability to act in its own interest. This chapter fleshes out the co-mingling of local and provincial interests in negotiating the shape and form of Canada’s first resort casino.

Windsor stakeholders initially proposed the casino be a smaller part of a larger diversification project. Provincial interests, to extract a greater proportion of revenues from the region, co-opted this initial project. The major changes concerned the size and scope of the casino—from a Monte Carlo-style casino as part of a larger development project to a Nevada-style resort casino—and from government owned and operated to a public-private owner and operating agreement. This transformation had consequences for the type of employment the casino would bring (i.e., a workforce reliant on tips employed by a Las Vegas consortium), the proportion of revenue the municipality would receive, and whether the casino would take on an integrated part of a larger redevelopment project or a self-contained, big box form of development. Indeed, while power was exercised at state/provincial and local levels, it was not exercised in an equal manner.

This case reveals how power struggles can take shape between state/provincial and municipal level interests. Following the construction of an economic revitalization initiative from idea to implementation shows the province’s willingness and ability to utilize inter-urban competition between economically depressed cities to implement a redevelopment project which prioritized provincial over municipal interests. Indeed, the province used the willingness of other cities also experiencing economic decline to host a casino as leverage against Windsor stakeholders (Hall 2006). With inter-city competition, Windsor stakeholders and the community were thrust into a win-lose dynamic that turned attention away from the ‘terms’ and put the focus on winning the casino. These shifting dynamics of struggle and the sheer economic desperation of Windsor marginalized Windsor stakeholders. In contrast to Felsenstein et al. (1999: 410), who argue that casino development places municipalities and communities in the powerful position of holding gaming licenses which gaming corporations “chase,” here, the provincial government held the resource and power of a gaming license. The Ontario provincial government thus wielded its ability to award casino licenses over Windsor stakeholders. In the end, Windsor

stakeholders had little choice but to accept the new development which largely served provincial over municipal interests.

Interestingly, however, in my 2014 interviews, Windsor stakeholders suggest that they initiated the movement to acquire a casino for the “public good” of the community *and with its support*. Indeed, unlike the majority of literature which suggests that casinos represent larger state/provincial interests preying on economically struggling communities, Windsor stakeholders contemporarily suggest that business, labour, and political interests in Windsor were acting in an entrepreneurial capacity by mobilizing broader community support and pressuring the provincial government. To a degree, this is accurate. It does, however, hide the power struggle which subsequently occurred. Examining the local news media leading up to acquiring the casino, it becomes apparent that what Windsor stakeholders originally proposed and what the community conceded to shifted. Unpacking the power struggles of acquiring the casino, I find that what the community was signing onto was more ‘smoke and mirrors’ relative to what the provincial government would allot to Windsor. Although Ontario legislation and my 2014-2015 interviews frame the casino as contributing to the “public good,” Windsor stakeholders were marginalized in the process of deciding what form the casino would take and its day-to-day operations. This framing works to shield the casino from criticism since Windsor stakeholders and community ‘got what they wanted.’

In principally emphasizing Windsor’s agency in these negotiations, local interests hide the power dynamics inherent in establishing the casino. Provincial interests—rather than municipal and community interests—ultimately had the power to define and oversee what would constitute the “public good.” The misapprehension of and/or glossing over of this more complex history—a history which suggests that Windsor became increasingly powerless through the process—results in local interests overstating Windsor’s role in acquiring the casino, calling into question the contemporary discourse of ‘complete community buy-in,’ since, if there ever was ‘buy-in,’ what the community was groomed to buy into was not, in the end, what they received. Oversimplifying the process of casino acquisition creates a coherent narrative of the municipality being an entrepreneur and its constituents ‘wanting this’ while the province is framed as working in partnership with local interest groups. The broader implication of Windsor stakeholders’ discourse of their entrepreneurial capacity is that municipal entrepreneurial efforts are a viable

pathway and effective strategy for cities experiencing economic decline to pursue their growth interests.

Windsor stakeholders' leverage in negotiating the form the casino would take with the province was altered once the provincial government announced several potential host sites. This uncertainty was pivotal in shifting the debate within the local news media. Concern moved from what form the casino would take to recasting these concerns as jeopardizing the chance of the province choosing Windsor as the host site. The severity of the late 1980s and early 1990s recession in Windsor while anticipating that NAFTA would result in the more permanent decline of Windsor's economy also contributed to Windsor having little negotiating power concerning the redrafted proposal. With the ominous clouds of free trade looming over the area's automotive industry, Windsor was not positioned to turn down such an offer, even if it was not what Windsor stakeholders created nor what the community was initially sold. The repackaged casino project meant more dollars flowing into Windsor through more investment in infrastructure, more consumer spending, and more jobs. With the larger casino meaning a more immediate injection of investment and jobs—especially to a city typically neglected by provincial funding and experiencing industrial decline—the pot was sweetened for Windsor stakeholders.

Provincial interests and Windsor stakeholders legitimized the transformed casino project to the Windsor community by drawing on the decline of the automotive industry, which was to occur more permanently after the signing of NAFTA. In fact, the casino megaproject could have the capacity to be a panacea for Windsor, which also would be—as municipal interests saw the inevitability of Detroit building casinos—competing for regional export dollars with already blighted Detroit. Since provincial and Windsor stakeholders primarily justified the Nevada-style resort casino to the community as a tool to transition displaced auto workers, in the next chapter, I examine whether and how the casino helped transition auto workers to the service sector.

### **Chapter 3: Casino Windsor as a Response to NAFTA and Automotive Job Loss**

With the signing of NAFTA, Canadian business, labour, and political interests anticipated the exodus of Canadian automotive jobs to Mexico. While still reeling from the late 1990s recession, NAFTA was to be the swift and final ‘nail in the coffin’ for the southwestern Ontario economy of Windsor. Business, labour, and political interests proposed a casino to offer alternate employment for displaced auto workers and the provincial government passed the Ontario Casino Corporation Act in 1993, allowing the Windsor pilot project to begin (The Government of Ontario 1993).

Casinos are primarily justified as a stopgap to rising unemployment in the face of industrial decline (Balzarini and Shlay 2016; Calvano and Andersson 2010). Two bodies of literature have examined the impact of casinos on employment. First, a literature anchored in economics tends to examine the effect of casino developments on net change in employment and wages, instead of shifts in industry mix (Chhabra 2007; Cotti 2008; Furlong 1998; Garrett 2006; McCarthy 2002; Moufakkir 2002; Richard 2010). Second, a smaller body of ethnographic research has also examined the employment impact of casinos. This research, however, is: a) based on geographic areas with a long history of service work (i.e., Las Vegas and Atlantic City) where ‘deindustrialization’ did not spur the development of casinos (Hannigan 2007; Mutari and Figart 2015; Sallaz 2002) or b) based in a deindustrialized context but lightly touches on casino workers without unearthing employment shifts (Taft 2016). In a deindustrializing setting, it remains unanswered whether displaced workers transition to casino employment. This chapter examines a city whose primary reason for getting a casino was the anticipation of automotive job loss and offers an understanding of how employment ‘shifts’ take place in a city experiencing economic decline.

The purveyors of Casino Windsor legitimized its development under the presumption that the automotive industry would contract and that displaced auto workers would then be pushed into casino employment. While the casino is now the second largest employer in the city, I examine whether the expected ‘transition’ actually took place. Put plainly, I examine who the casino was intended to—and those who it actually did—employ. If automotive workers were in fact pushed to the casino, this would suggest that casino jobs were replacing auto jobs. This would also suggest that the sectoral mix of the area had moved from manufacturing to service

and hospitality. This would be evidence of a ‘postindustrial shift.’ In contrast to simply looking at employment counts and other crude employment indicators, this chapter complicates the employment effects of casinos by teasing out the employment shifts the casino fostered and whether the casino was a tool to facilitate a postindustrial transition of work.

By targeting these shifts, I find that—despite the forecasted impact of NAFTA—the expected transition of automotive workers did not take shape in concert with the casino’s development. I find that displaced auto workers were not pushed to the casino en masse. Indeed, based on who the casino ended up employing, the casino did not represent the expected transition from ‘cars to casinos.’ Rather, a boom in the automotive sector went hand-in-hand with the casino’s ‘glory years’ (1994-2000), occurring at the same time when laid off automotive workers were recalled due to surging US vehicle demand. Ultimately, the ‘crisis’ of free trade for auto did not materialize during the casino’s prosperous years. Instead, existing workers in the service industry were pulled into the casino, concentrating low-wage service workers from diverse jobs into one facility.

Windsor stakeholders’ collective understanding—which suggests that the casino provided a stopgap for manufacturing decline—has, however, endured. The discourse of the impact of free trade and automotive decline, which initially justified the casino being brought into the community, currently still justifies the casino’s establishment and existence. With this consistent understanding across time, Windsor is positioned as having ‘had no choice’ because of manufacturing loss but to accept the casino. This functions to prop-up the economic rationalizations for casino development—casinos are brought into and help regions experiencing industrial decline—despite this case not supporting that outcome.

The decline of the Casino Windsor’s visitation, revenue, and employment maps onto the construction of three casinos in Detroit in the late 1990s. This decline also coincided with automotive decline in Windsor. Indeed, the life cycle of the casino—from boom to bust—had burst when automotive workers could have potentially used casino employment. Since a short-term revenue boom characterized the casino, the expiration of the casino’s prosperity must be seriously considered, especially when its main justification to communities is employment gains. The automotive boom coinciding with the casino’s prosperous years also challenges whether the casino would have been independently successful in offering economic opportunity to the

community's workforce. This chapter challenges the collective understanding for hosting Casino Windsor along with economic rationalizations regarding the purpose of casino development.

This chapter relies on the local newspaper, the *Windsor Star*, from 1988 to 2015, descriptive statistics from Statistics Canada and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, and interviews conducted in 2014-2015 with Windsor stakeholders, automotive workers, and casino workers. First, I examine the collective understanding of the casino as a revitalizing force to absorb those experiencing job loss resulting from manufacturing decline. I then examine who exactly transitioned to the casino. In essence, I find the casino pulled in workers from the existing service sector, contrary to the assumption that the casino helped the community during industrial decline by providing employment for automotive workers.

### *The Collective Understanding: Free Trade and the Casino*

*Windsor, according to most industry experts, can expect to lose thousands of auto-related jobs over the next few years. Diversification is a hot topic now but it's going to get a lot hotter as the city goes into industrial decline. Here [casino gambling], if we can get over our holier-than-thou hang-ups, is an opportunity to develop a new labour-intensive tax-generating industry. – Henderson (1988), reporter from the Windsor Star*

With the signing of NAFTA and an unemployment rate of 12.9 percent in 1992, Windsor was eager to diversify—that is, to move away from its dependence on the automotive industry (Gower 1996).<sup>72</sup> Forecasting globalization to have a marked impact, a group of academics from the University of Windsor also stated to the *Windsor Star* (Vander Doelen 1993a) that Windsor would be undergoing a drastic 'restructuring' in the years to come:

Windsor will not be the same city of roses and factory workers in a few years, a team of university researchers predicts. With casino gambling on the way and new technology repopulating its factories, sociologists and other experts say Windsor and its workforce may be unrecognizable in a few years. 'Windsor is due for a dramatic restructuring,' said Deborah Gustavsen, a professor of sociology and anthropology at the University of Windsor. 'It's not just the introduction of high-stakes commercial gambling—Windsor was going to change anyway,' Gustavsen said. 'We see the restructuring of Windsor as the bigger picture – it's the restructuring of an automotive town.'

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<sup>72</sup> The Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the United States, and Mexico was signed on August 12, 1992, and took effect in 1994. At that time, there were fears that the agreement might negatively affect the Canadian car manufacturing industry by driving plants south of the border to Mexico, where the cost of labour is much cheaper, or by putting downward pressure on the wages earned by Canadian workers (Ravindra and Shinnan 2000).

Given the demise of automotive jobs, the casino was a welcome solution among Windsor stakeholders. As reported in the *Windsor Star* (Lajoie and Brennan 1993), bringing a casino to Windsor “would be an economic stimulus for a city hit hard by free trade.”

Anticipating the loss of automotive work, the casino represented diversification through tourism and the creation of service work. This diversification would act to replace manufacturing jobs lost to developing countries offering cheaper labour. As the *Windsor Star* (Marchese 1988) reported:

Bob McConkey, chairman of the Ontario coordinating council for Tourism Week, says cities like Windsor, with a heavy concentration of manufacturing industries, should be excited by the prospects in the tourist trade. Cash-starved municipalities are looking to tourism, McConkey said, because of its low overhead costs [...] McConkey said tourism already employs 600,000 Canadians directly and, as more manufacturing is done using cheap Third World labour, tourism is expected to become the largest industry in North America by the turn of the century.

To mitigate the decline in the automotive industry, the casino was intended to provide employment for workers experiencing job loss in the auto industry. Hall (1992), a columnist at the *Windsor Star*, argued for the importance of the casino and continuing diversification through tourism as an avenue to provide alternate employment:

It should be pretty clear that the local jobs lost to recession and free trade aren't coming back. North America and Windsor will not reclaim the lion's share of the automobile market. What's left of the service sector will definitely not support us in the manner to which we've become accustomed. I've seen what having too few resources can do to the population and lifestyle of a community. Now I'm willing to risk the ill-effects of having too much choice and too much prosperity.

The casino was then constructed as alternate employment for those who would be displaced from manufacturing. The *Windsor Star* (Cross 1993b) also stressed the service sector employment opportunities that the casino would create for those in the manufacturing sector, reporting:

The casino – which should be open in about 18 months – is expected to create at least 1,000 jobs, but thousands more are expected to open at hotels, restaurants, and other service-sector businesses. Some people who worked in manufacturing should rethink their idea of work, said Jim Evans, vice-president of the restaurant association, which has about 175 members. ‘If they want to work with people and learn those people skills, it's a hell of an opportunity.’ In Europe, a waiter has a real career. Here, a waiter is something you do until you move on to your true vocation, said Evans. ‘We're telling people that now you don't have to leave.’

The above quote suggested that manufacturing workers in Windsor ought to change their mindset surrounding what is seen as ‘good,’ lifelong employment. Indeed, this suggests that the



casino not only represented the economic ‘restructuring’ of an auto town, but the restructuring of ideas of what is considered ‘good’ work. As captured in a *Windsor Star* article in October of 1992, the casino was depicted as a “psychological lifeline,” proving that Windsor had a “future and isn’t doomed to the irreversible decline with the automotive industry” (Henderson 1992).

Windsor stakeholders echoed a similar sensibility during interviews, suggesting that the casino was a necessary measure due to the soon to be lost automotive industry. As Susan, a Windsor small business representative, comments on the importance of the casino being brought to Windsor: “Well unless the city could have diversified itself in some way, there would have been a mass exodus or become a ghost town.” Ken, an executive at Casino Windsor, also states, “It made a lot of sense for Windsor, cause at the time there was some economic challenges and certainly jobs were key.” Albert, a Windsor city council member, also reflects on why the casino was brought to Windsor, stating, “We were looking for a new industry to help sustain us.” Relatedly, Barry, a Windsor media representative, suggests that the casino functioned to absorb those who were displaced by automotive job loss—although incorrect—and represented hope for the community. He says:

At the beginning, which was the whole point of it, it represented hope, it represented the possibility of employment, it represented stability, money, income, and for five thousand people. That’s what it turned out to be. Now, of course the people at the top were almost all imported, but I mean the staff at Caesars were all laid off GM people, trim plant people. And going to the casino today and you’ll still find people who were former GM trim plant employees, are now working in housekeeping, cleaning hotel rooms or servers on the floor. There’s a woman in the bar I go to after work and she’s a server now but because of layoff, she ended up cleaning rooms for five years. She’s been there for 25 years and she doesn’t have any schooling or training to do anything else so she loves the casino, she loves working there. She’s grateful! And that’s what it represents. It’s not for everyone. If it’s not for you then go do something else.

Windsor stakeholders suggest free trade and the loss of auto manufacturing were the primary motivators behind acquiring a casino. Indeed, Windsor stakeholders view the casino as functioning to help transition, or, in the least, provide support for a community which was experiencing industrial decline. For instance, Jim, a NDP Windsor representative, draws on how the forces of globalization and free trade agreements pushed Windsor to entertain a casino as an alternative source of economic viability. He states:

When you look at the shrinkage of the auto market here, a big part of the economy in terms of employment in particular. As opposed to other communities, who weren’t facing the same kind of impending problems. [...] I think the bottom line for Windsor was

because of the financial difficulties, the economy was in such poor shape. We've had a lengthy history of going through transitions, whether it was moving from, for instance, the agricultural sector, and trading shipping, that we had going through Windsor. But then we are now going through another one. [...] We could see that with globalization, the auto industry was going to be in trouble. The trade agreements were going to negatively impact this community. I think there was a general knowledge of that, I would say a fairly sophisticated knowledge across the whole of the community, not just intellectuals or business leaders or labour leaders. It was more widespread than that, so there was an openness to look to other alternatives.

Highlighting the inevitability of economic transitions, Jim suggests that the casino was key to Windsor's drive to diversify away from automotive manufacturing. Denis, a Windsor labour representative, also suggests that the casino has provided employment to offset the loss of manufacturing jobs. He states:

Windsor right now, is one of the worst economic times. [...] The youth unemployment rate is probably the highest we've ever seen. It's over 25 percent. I mean, when you take into consideration that over the last three years, we've had the worst unemployment rates across Canada, you know you really gotta sit back and say, 'Thank god that we've got something like Caesars Windsor, 'cause it actually provides approximately 3000 people with jobs. What would the city look like without it? And again, you'd have to extend that out even further, places like Windsor Assembly plant, Ford Engine plant, we just lost General Motors, and that was a big blow to Windsor's economy. And we still haven't recuperated and we're still losing a lot of our independent parts plants to south of the border, which is a challenge for us, entirely. Does that make you feel better?

Ellen, a city council executive official, also comments on the decision to adopt the casino as a means to diversify, although not necessarily a first option to pursue relative to high-technology industries. Windsor would essentially take any sort of investment and jobs it could find. She states:

Back in the 90s and 80s we really were just automotive. [...] Because we were so heavily automotive and we had such economic downturns all the time, it was like we'd take anything we could get, quite frankly. Whatever we could get that was different than what we had. It was a good thing. And not that Caesars or that casino gaming is settling, because it is wonderful, you know, it brings lots of revenue and beautiful buildings and so on. So, I don't call it settling, but I mean, when you think about economic diversification, you don't start by saying, 'casino gaming,' you start thinking about other industries. But we would take any kind of economic diversification that we could get.

Calvin, a Windsor Liberal representative, echoes this sentiment that the community of Windsor, in connection to its faltering automotive industry, 'would take what it could get':

And I remember, because the economy was so bad at the time here, you know, the kind of opposition that you see in places like Toronto and elsewhere didn't materialize. I don't think there was any overwhelming desire for it, but I think the attitude of people was 'Well hey, we got a problem. Let's do what we can.'

Evidently concerned about the impact of free trade in relation to the decline of its main industry, automotive, the promise of jobs significantly contributed to Windsor agreeing to host a casino. Barry, a Windsor media representative, states during interview, bringing "good jobs [...]" trumped everything," recounting that there were only a "handful" of people against the casino. The economic problems Windsor faced—and saw itself facing on the horizon—put Windsor in a position of seemingly being unable to say "no," cultivating, as Calvin, a Windsor Liberal representative, describes, a "willingness to explore less conventional options." The casino would function as a tool to transition the casualties of manufacturing decline. In brief, the casino represented diversification through tourism which would help stem the fallout from auto manufacturing loss.

The collective understanding in Windsor concerning the purpose of Casino Windsor is congruent with typical understandings of why casinos have spread throughout North America. Essentially, as a result of the process of deindustrialization, casinos were brought in as a stopgap for manufacturing decline. In the Windsor scenario, it could be presumed that as the automotive industry contracted in the region, jobs were lost, and automotive workers transitioned to casino employment. Below, I examine whether and how this transition occurred.

### *Pulling in Service Workers*

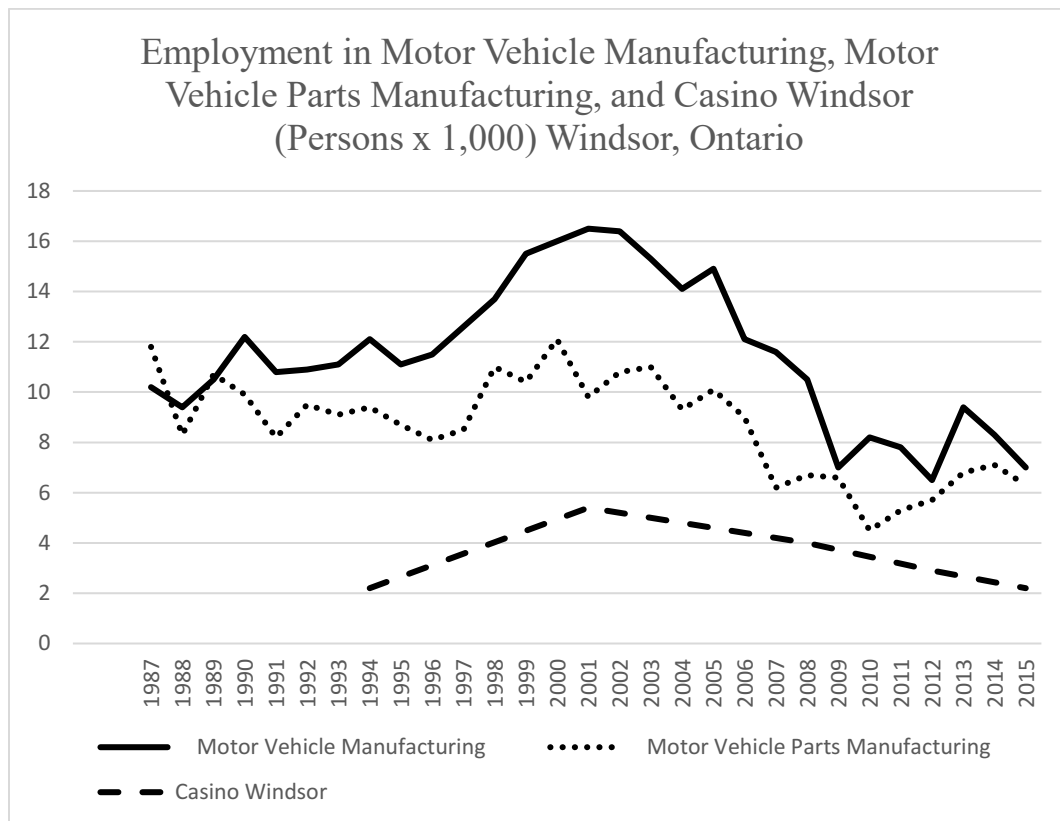
Despite the consistent understanding that the casino offered a way to cope with employment loss in manufacturing, in actuality, such losses did not materialize. Automotive layoffs prior to the casino opening were temporary and mostly due to weak vehicle demand in both Canada and the US in the early 1990s. After the recession ended in 1991, the increase in vehicle demand was steady and more pronounced than in previous business cycles (Ravindra and Shinnan 2000).<sup>73</sup> The opening and boom of the casino mirrored the rebound and boom in the

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<sup>73</sup> Approximately 70 percent of the total value of Canadian vehicle production is exported, mostly to the US. Beginning in 1991, the US experienced strong and sustained economic growth which undoubtedly contributed to the surge in the Canadian transportation sector (Ravindra and Shinnan 2000).

automotive sector (approximately 1994-2001). These concurrent trends are reflected in the employment numbers for the casino and auto industry (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Employment in Motor Vehicle Manufacturing, Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing, and Casino Windsor in Windsor, Ontario



Sources: Motor Vehicle Manufacturing (3361) and Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing (3363): Statistics Canada, Custom tabulation.  
Casino Windsor: Unifor 2015

When asked if auto workers moved to the casino for employment, Tom, a Windsor labour representative representing casino workers during this period, stresses that there was *not* a large contingent of workers who transitioned from the manufacturing sector to the casino. He states, during a 2014 interview:

No, in fact I didn't see a lot out of the manufacturing sector at all go to Casino Windsor. [...] It wasn't a lot of industrial workers that got jobs at Casino Windsor. [...] At that particular time, most of the industrial workers were laid off as a result of recession but subject to recall.

The employment histories of casino and auto workers also showed how automotive workers were not experiencing a move to casino employment. Among my respondents, 32 of 43 auto workers interviewed were hired in auto assembly at Chrysler or Ford from 1993 to 2000 with the majority—29 of 43—hired from 1993 to 1996, mirroring the years the casino opened and prospered. Put simply, the fears of NAFTA did not materialize, yet the casino did.<sup>74</sup> In addition to auto workers not needing the employment when the casino initially opened, auto workers also suggest during interviews that, if experiencing job loss, they would not seek work at the casino. Casino workers make approximately \$42,000 annually whereas an auto assembly worker makes approximately \$75,000 annually. Anne, an auto worker, states, “There is a big difference, when [an auto worker who] is making \$35 an hour loses a job, they are not going to the casino, they are moving out of their homes and they are leaving the city.”

Instead, the casino pulled in substantial numbers of workers from lower-wage service and hospitality jobs who were lured by the higher wages. Tom, a Windsor labour representative central in unionizing the casino workers, notes:

Because the casino were looking to people with financial backgrounds, people with hospitality backgrounds, service backgrounds, they were looking for people from banks, credit unions, financial institutions. So, a lot of the employees that were hired at Casino Windsor had some basic experience in a classification they were hired. Casino Windsor really took a fair amount of bank employees, financial employees. They took a fair amount of cooks for example, out of the historic restaurants in Windsor and Essex County. And the rationale was obvious, the pay was better. So, it wasn't a lot of industrial workers that got jobs at Casino Windsor.

Mike, another local labour representative, also recalls how the casino functioned to poach workers already in the service sector. He states, “In fact, we had restaurateurs of the day, weren't

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<sup>74</sup> Looking at both the assembly and the parts manufacturing establishments in southwestern Ontario, none of the predicted negative effects of NAFTA materialized. Both sectors had very strong performance through the early 1990s. The location of most of the parts and assembly manufacturers in southern Ontario, directly across the border from the heart of the American industry, has proven crucial to the success of the Canadian auto industry. In 1999, the capacity of Canada's 14 assembly plants was 2.7 million vehicles a year, representing about 16 percent of North American production and 5 percent of world output. Capacity was set to rise to about three million vehicles by the year 2000, once planned plant expansions were completed. This output is roughly the same share of production that Canada had before NAFTA. Given that the Canadian export market is so closely dependent on the demand in the United States, the sustained economic growth in the 1990s south of the border has meant a healthy export market for the Canadian manufacturers of transportation equipment. In 1998, the trade surplus had reached 10.4 billion dollars (Ravindra and Shinnan 2000).

very happy with us setting the bar [wages] as high as we did because they were losing their workers to the casino, so that caused a little bit of riff.”

The majority of casino workers were previously employed in the service sector; in fact, only one of my casino respondents came from the auto industry as the result of a layoff. The majority of casino and auto workers interviewed who knew people working in the casino also said that they were from the service sector. Matt, a casino worker, affirms, “We created a vacuum when that casino opened up. It sucked everybody out of all the other jobs, especially your servers and all those positions.” Diane, a casino worker, also reports, “Like everybody was going, it was like this mass exodus out of Tim Horton’s or any job that people with a pulse could be drawn into the casino.” Indeed, working at the casino offers comparatively better compensation than other low-skill service sector work and workers reported an initial base wage increase of \$3-\$4, not including tips. Thus, as Denise, a casino worker, notes, the casino “cleaned out a lot of places that asked, ‘If you wanted fries with that?’ Like a lot of McDonald’s, Tim Horton’s, all the fast food places were pretty much ransacked for people.” Many other workers report leaving McDonalds, bank telling, retail, bartending, and, as Lucy, a casino worker, puts it, “dead end, low paying minimum wage jobs.”

In contrast to the collective understanding, it seems that the casino had a ‘pull’ effect on workers in other service and hospitality jobs within the city. This is in contrast to the ‘push’ story of the casino providing employment for those who were pushed out of the automotive industry. Pulling service workers in, the casino largely did not provide alternative employment for those experiencing automotive job loss since auto worker displacement did not coincide with the opening of the casino. Instead, the casino shifted service workers from diverse service sector workplaces to a single place of employment. Below, I examine why this transition—of industrial workers to the service sector—did not transpire by examining the concurrent trends of the automotive boom and the casino’s opening and prosperity along with their coinciding decline.

### *Car Boom – Casino Boom*

In the initial years after opening, Casino Windsor was deemed a success. As the report from the consulting firm KPMG states, the casino has “contributed to the border city’s economic revival” and has created a “new sense of vibrancy in the local community [...] add[ing] a colourful and prominent chapter in Windsor’s economic success story” (Brennan 1995). During

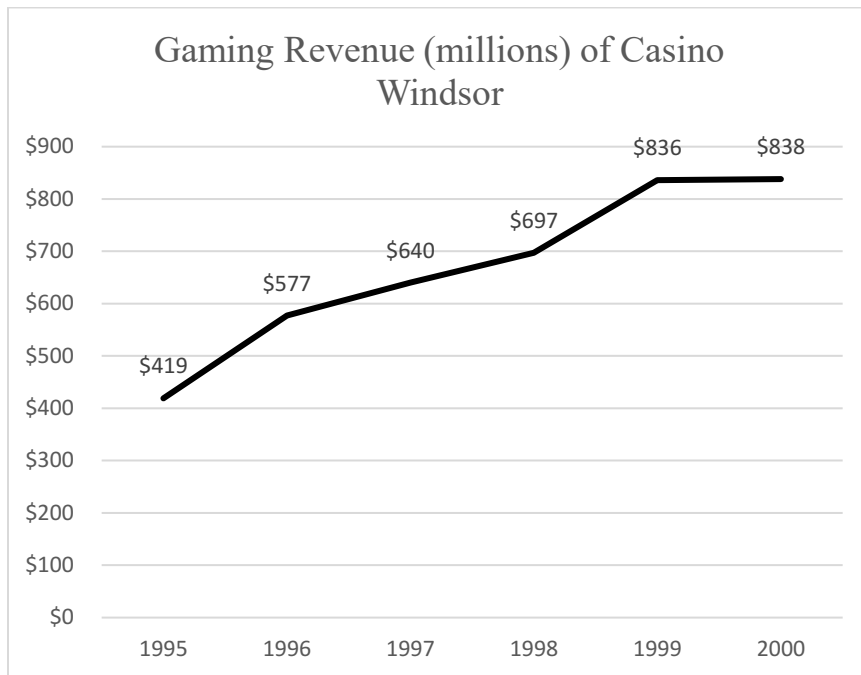
a 2014 interview, Joseph, a Windsor Chamber of Commerce representative central in the process of acquiring the casino, states:

The casino was so successful that it was shocking to us in the beginning. No one could have predicted, we had studies that showed well, we're gonna get five, six, seven thousand people a day, and it's gonna be busy, we're like 'Well that seems kinda crazy high but we'll take it for what it's worth.' Then we were doing 12-14-15 weekends, putting 35,000 people, it was like 'Oh God.'

Phipps (2004: 408)—a social statistics professor at the University of Windsor— while focusing on the housing prices near the casino, also acknowledges the simultaneous success of the two industries and the dropping unemployment rate: “A boom in the [auto] industry coupled with the casino employment lowered the [Windsor] CMA’s unemployment rate from 14.4 percent in January 1993 to 6.2 percent in December 2001.”

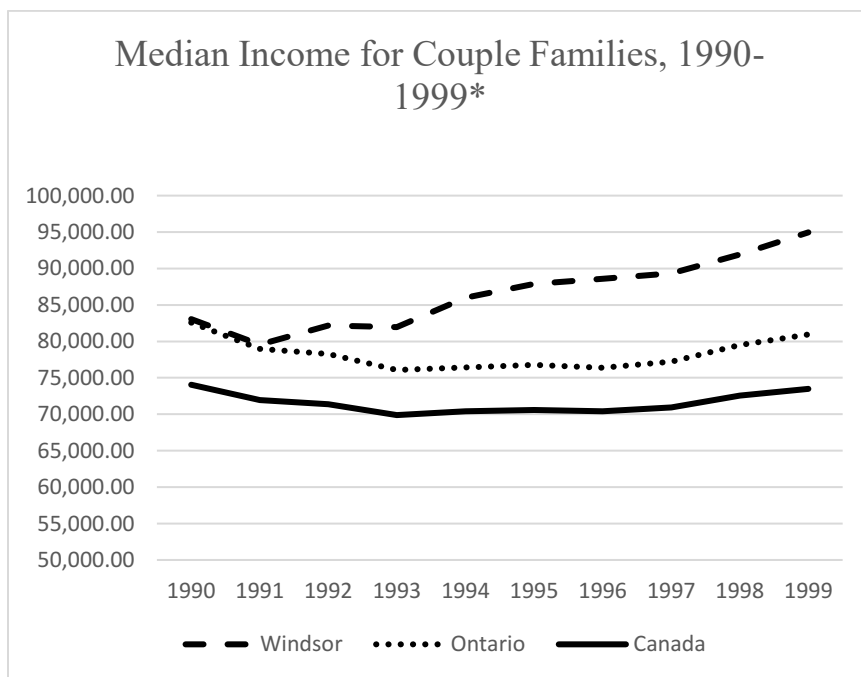
This upward trajectory of the casino continued from 1994 till 2000 as revenues increased (see Figure 8). Part of this success could be attributed to the increased discretionary income in the local community due to the automotive rebound. Figure 9 displays the rise of median income in Windsor during this period. The success of the casino in these years, thus, is difficult to separate from the automotive resurgence. Indeed, the casino did not act as a stopgap for manufacturing decline—as the collective understanding suggests—and may have, in part, been spurred on by the automotive boom.

Figure 8: Gaming Revenue (millions) of Casino Windsor, 1995-2000



Source: Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation. Freedom of Information Request: Casino Windsor Annual Gross Revenue for 1995-2014.

Figure 9: Median Income for Couple Families, Windsor, Ontario, 1990-1999



Source: Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulation  
 \*2015 constant dollars



With the prosperity Windsor was experiencing, Meyer (1995), in the *Windsor Star*, also noted a corresponding population increase: “As the local auto industry boomed and Windsor’s casino attracted national attention, the area achieved a net migration rate more than twice as high as Toronto’s last year, Statistics Canada reported.”

Some auto workers also note in interviews the coincidence of automotive and casino success. Adam, a Chrysler assembly worker, states, “at the time [of the casino opening], Chrysler was working 6/7 days a week and we had GM here, and I think Ford was still here too. So, there was lots of expendable income here. A lot!” Walt, another auto assembly worker, reiterates:

We had the automotive industry on both sides. And Detroit used to be the automotive capital of manufacturing and they probably had middle-class money that could sustain the casinos in the area. So, plop it down here. It was tourism and its own local citizenship could help supplement it too.

Frank, an auto worker, also states:

They saw the economy is running high. Everybody is spending money left and right you know. Everybody is taking out these mortgages everybody is living in \$300,000 homes in Windsor, you know 350, and you know money flowing [...] and Michigan too, with auto money, once one of the richest states in America.

Though initially brought into Windsor to act as a stopgap for employment losses in the auto industry, the casino benefited from the surge in the auto industry and its related spin offs.<sup>75</sup> The success of the casino occurred in concert with the resurgence of the automotive industry.

### *The Decline: Casino Competition and the Automotive Bust*

The boom of the casino was short-lived. In addition, as the casino’s success coincided with the automotive boom, the casino’s decline went hand-in-hand with the loss of automotive work in the region. The turn away from the casino’s initial success, with a peak of \$838 million in gross revenues in 2000, is exposed in declining revenues (see Figure 10).

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<sup>75</sup> One auto assembly job is said to support 3-4 retailing, food, construction, and public service jobs (Stantec 2006).

Figure 10: Gaming Revenue (millions) of Casino Windsor, 2000-2014



Source: Ontario and Lottery Gaming Corporation. Freedom of Information Request: Casino Windsor Annual Gross Revenue for 1994-2014.

Also contributing to the casino’s prosperity, Casino Windsor was the only casino in the region from 1994 until the late 1990s. In the late 1990s, however, Michigan constructed three casinos in Detroit in an effort to bring back gaming dollars spent across the border. Given this, the regional monopoly Casino Windsor once enjoyed ended and visitation to the Windsor casino shrank. As Denis, a Windsor labour representative, notes during a 2014 interview:

The reality is we have four casinos that are very large, all within a [four mile] area [...] So now you’re getting a one in four hit. [...] So, it is somewhat saturated. [...] It’s always worrisome to know that you have three other casinos right across the border, and you start to dwindle down and lose more patrons.

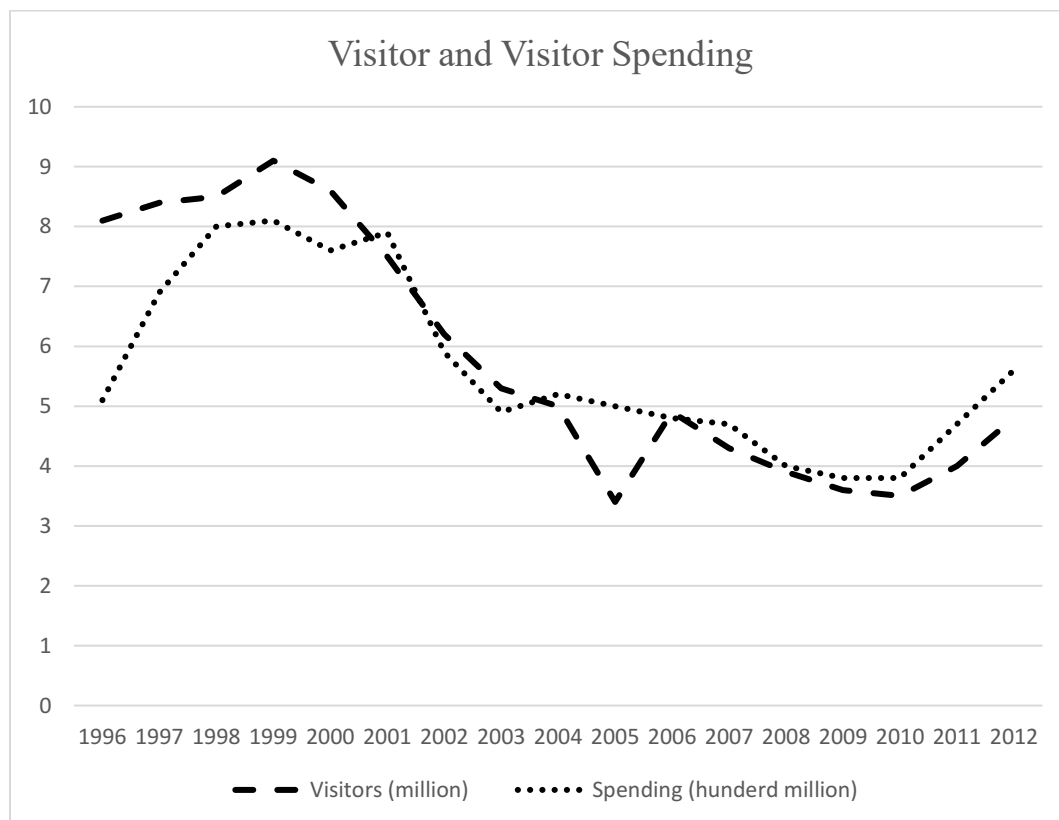
In fiscal 2013-2014, MGM Grand Detroit remained the leader in market share with 36 percent, “significantly greater than that of [Casino] Windsor” (Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation 2014: 32).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> A Freedom of Information request was filed with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation to attain the exact market share of Casino Windsor. This request was denied due to Caesars Entertainment holding exclusive rights to this information.

Between 1998 and 2008, the number of US citizens coming to Windsor fell by 74 percent (Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation 2012). Commenting on the decrease in US tourism, the mayor of Windsor, Eddie Francis, stated, “...the Windsor casino at one point drew some 80 percent of its clientele from the United States, with 20 percent from Canada. Now, it’s about 50-50” (Babad 2013). Mapping onto the casino’s declining revenues,

Figure 11 illustrates the drop in tourists visiting and spending in the Windsor area; it peaked in 1999 at approximately nine million visitors and then sharply declined until 2005 and plateauing at the 3.5-4.5 million mark. Visitor spending peaked at approximately 8.1 hundred million in 1999 and declined and plateaued between four and 5.5 hundred million beginning in 2003.

Figure 11: Visitor and Visitor Spending in Windsor, CMA



Source: Tourism Windsor, Essex, and Pelee Island (2015)

\* 2005: Data release incomplete

\*\*2011: Based on operational and conceptual changes, the data for this year is not a true comparison with previous years.

Relatedly, from 2002 to 2008, gambling revenues for Casino Windsor dropped 60 percent along with casino employment, decreasing from its peak of 5,400 in 2001 to 2,200 union employees in 2015 (Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation 2012; Unifor 2015).

Most casino workers also view casino expansion as unsustainable. As Rob, a casino worker, comments, “There is only so much money in the pot and there is way too many hands. That is why they are having so many problems. Casinos are going bankrupt.” Many workers expressed concern about the future of Casino Windsor, discussing the casino bankruptcies in Atlantic City, at Detroit’s Greektown Casino, and the Caesars Entertainment Corporation bankruptcy in 2015. Despite shrinking revenues, the Ontario government, like its southern neighbours, continues to encourage casino development. In 2013, the provincial government announced it would create five new gaming facilities, bringing the total in Ontario to 29 (Pearson 2013).

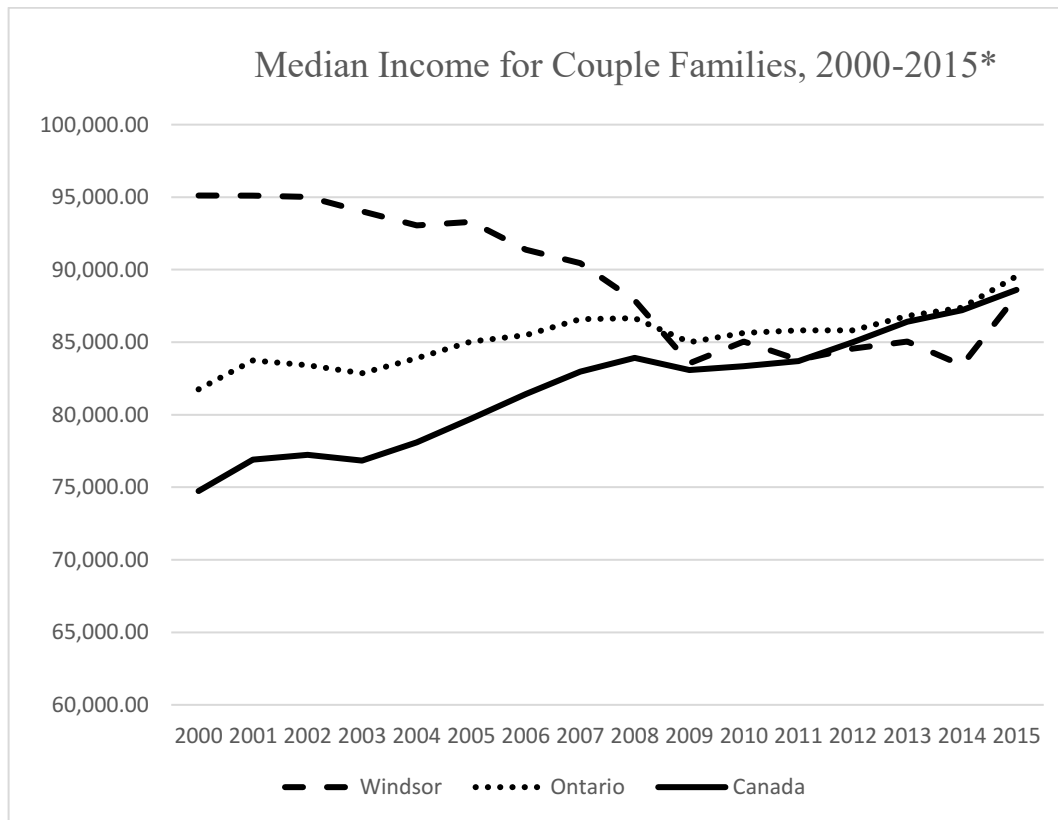
#### *Automotive Bust*

Coinciding with casino expansion in the early 2000s, Windsor’s auto industry also experienced a decline. After employment peaked in 2001, Big Three plants began mass layoffs and closings. From 2001 to 2014, Windsor shed approximately 8,300 (a 50 percent change) automotive manufacturing jobs (see Figure 7). The decline of manufacturing is also more broadly reflected in its proportion of the Windsor workforce. In 2001, the manufacturing sector accounted for 29.9 percent of the Windsor CMA’s employment whereas in 2007 it accounted for 23.0 percent of employment (EDP Consulting 2008).

The 2008 recession especially compounded these trends. Across all industries, Windsor lost more than 20,000 jobs (-14 percent) between 2006 and 2010 in contrast to four percent for Ontario and 2.5 percent nationally (Cooper 2012). In addition, the increasing capital intensity of manufacturing production and a shift to automation has resulted in the employment of fewer people, particularly low-skilled workers. This has reduced payrolls and lessened local demand for goods and services in Windsor (Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce 2013). The decline of automotive employment in the area also reduced local discretionary income available for casino entertainment. This happened in tandem with the casino relying more on its local population for revenue due to casino expansion in the region. For instance, Windsor’s median income for couple families in 2000 was over \$91,500, above the provincial and national medians

(see Figure 12). However, by 2012, the median income in Windsor fell to approximately \$81,550, below the provincial and national medians of \$82,760 and \$81,980, respectively (Irvine 2014).

Figure 12: Median Income for Couple Families, Windsor, Ontario, 2000-2015



Source: Statistics Canada, 2015; CANSIM Table 111-0012

\*2015 constant dollars

Some auto workers note the decline in automotive sector jobs, and job loss more generally, in Windsor as contributing to the dropping visitation numbers of local casino patrons. Auto workers, who used to frequent the casino, report going less frequently or no longer going, claiming that it was no longer affordable. Other auto workers note that the popularity of the casino declined because of Windsor’s declining economy and the loss of discretionary income. As Tony, an auto worker, states, “At the beginning it was huge. But now people around here can’t afford to go anymore.”

Ultimately, increasing casino competition along with the decline of the automotive sector, including a host of other unfavorable factors—what Betty, a casino worker, describes as a “perfect storm”—including post-9/11 border security, the closing of the exchange rate gap (the Canadian

dollar was trading at approximately 0.65 during the late 90s versus 0.99 in fiscal 2012), higher gas prices (which particularly impacted the spending patterns of US patrons), and the provincial smoking ban (enacted in 2006) have all contributed to the declining revenues for Casino Windsor. The slide of the casino, beginning in the early 2000s, coincided with drastic losses in automotive employment. Put plainly, when auto workers may have utilized casino employment, the life cycle of the casino—from boom to bust—had already burst.

### *Conclusion*

These findings challenge the collective reasoning for hosting Casino Windsor along with typical economic rationalizations concerning the purpose of casino development that focuses on the employment ‘shifts’ casinos create. I examine who the casino was intended to—and those who it actually did—employ. Contrary to the assumption that the casino helped the community during industrial decline by providing employment for automotive workers, I find Casino Windsor pulled in workers from the service sector. This complicates the view that casinos work to shift regions experiencing industrial decline into tourism and service sectors (DiGaetano and Lawless 1999; McCarthy 2002; Wacker 2006). Indeed, while Windsor was the test site for policy experimentation via casino development, the ‘postindustrial shift’ did not transpire as anticipated. Instead, the casino concentrated low-wage service sector workers from diverse jobs into one facility. While the casino was initially sold as a way to absorb those experiencing job loss due to automotive decline, the casino, in fact, ‘pulled in’ the service sector workforce rather than transitioning those ‘pushed out’ of automotive. There basically was no ‘jobless auto worker’ being pushed to transition to the service sector during the initial ‘golden years’ of the casino.

The supposed havoc free trade would wreak on automotive employment initially justified the casino’s existence. Automotive workers, however, were not drawn into the casino workforce. This can be partly explained by the fact that, while the casino’s mass hiring was occurring, the decimation of automotive work was not materializing. Quite the opposite occurred, in fact, as the automotive industry was experiencing a boom of its own due to increased US vehicle demand. Moreover, while the casino was developed under the pretext of fear surrounding NAFTA, there was a misapprehension of the problem; an *immediate* effect of free trade was wrongly anticipated

as the Canadian automotive industry's strategic position relative to the US<sup>77</sup> and its dependency on vehicle demand in the US market was underestimated.

Since the success of the casino was concurrent with an automotive boom in the region, it is unclear whether the casino would have been such a success independent of the automotive resurgence. However, when the automotive industry declined, so too did the casino. Indeed, when automotive workers could have hypothetically transitioned to casino employment, the casino was in decline. Windsor stakeholders misapprehended the lag between signing, implementation, and effect of free trade while underestimating the Canadian automotive industry's strategic position vis-a-vis the US and its dependence on US vehicle demand. The casino's primary justification centering on the fear of NAFTA was unfounded. Nonetheless, Windsor stakeholders' rendering of events props-up the economic rationalization and policy justifications of casino expansion, despite the evidence in this case not pointing to this sequence of events.

Ultimately, the workers the casino was meant to 'save' did not need saving. Nonetheless, the casino was intended not only to supply jobs for the displaced auto worker but to generate *good* jobs. According to Windsor business, labour, and political leaders, these were to be well-paying and stable jobs, which could possibly be a substitute for the income brought to workers through the auto industry. Despite the casino not bringing in the automotive workforce, there was an expectation among some Windsor stakeholders and workers alike that the casino would provide automotive-like wages. In the next chapter, I examine where this expectation emerged from and whether this expectation was realized.

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<sup>77</sup> Windsor is strategic geographically and in terms of the low Canadian dollar, which was trading at approximately 0.65 during the late 1990s (Holden 2007).

## **Chapter 4: The Canadian Auto Workers, the New Democratic Party, and the Casino Industry: A Struggle over Wages**

Through high unionization rates, casino jobs may provide a counterexample to the connection between low-skill service and hospitality work and highly commodified labour (Benz 2004; Waddoups and Eade 2013). Existing research on casino workers, however, suggests that casino workers embrace a commodified vision of their labour (i.e., entrepreneurialism and individualism) to cope with the precarity of their work (Sallaz 2002; Taft 2016). This chapter examines the Canadian Auto Workers' (CAW) attempt to decommodify labour at Casino Windsor. The CAW brought a decommodified "industrial mind" into the casino industry. Casino Windsor workers initially did adopt a decommodified vision of wage entitlements; yet, casino workers now (2014-2015) embrace a market-oriented 'service mind.'

The CAW has a history of bargaining successfully to decommodify the wage rates for Big Three (Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler) low-skilled automotive assembly workers (Esping-Andersen 1990; Gindin 1995). When organizing and bargaining (1994-1995) on behalf of casino workers, the CAW attempted to frame wages as a share of profits in Ontario's first casino, Casino Windsor.<sup>78</sup> Despite this framework, the casino membership perceives their wages from a neoclassical standpoint, viewing their wages relative to their human capital.<sup>79</sup> In contrast, I find that automotive workers continue to stress their entitlement to a proportion of the profits they create for the employer. The central point here is to demonstrate that there is nothing inherent in linking industrial wages to a share of surplus or services wages to competitive market forces.

Using Las Vegas casino jobs as a comparative case, I draw on secondary data to show that a decommodified share of profits approach to wage entitlements can happen.<sup>80</sup> I then explain why Casino Windsor workers came to see themselves as part of a broader service sector, and why they link that perception to the idea that their wages should be determined by market forces

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<sup>78</sup> Due to a history of high unionization rates in auto manufacturing, in 1997, Windsor had high levels of labour union participation with 41.1 percent union density—the proportion of the paid workforce who are union members—with the Ontario provincial average at 28.1 percent (Jackson and Schetagne 2004). Windsor continues to be known as a 'union town' (Hammer 2010).

<sup>79</sup> I define human capital as composed of an individual's education and training, which then influences the rewards an individual receives in the labour market (Becker 1994).

<sup>80</sup> In fact, southern Nevada is now considered one of the last strongholds in the US for labour union membership activity, with some even calling Nevada the "New Detroit" (Hannigan 2007; Ventura 2003: 98).



instead of an entitlement to a share of employer profits.<sup>81</sup> Put differently, why do Casino Windsor wages not get decommodified? I argue that two factors explain why the CAW's efforts failed: 1) the failure of the New Democratic Party of Ontario (NDP) to support the CAW (instead, the NDP actually worked against the CAW) and; 2) the lower union density in the service sector, which meant that the overall service sector labour market was more commodified. Through interviews with Windsor stakeholders, automotive workers, and casino workers, and an examination of the local newspaper coverage of Casino Windsor from 1994 to 2014,<sup>82</sup> I show that Casino Windsor workers' understanding of wage entitlements based on market-oriented expectations is not due to some inherent nature of service work. Instead, their understanding is the result of being embedded in a political and institutional environment that does not nurture an alternative model of wage entitlements.

The CAW Local 444 brought, as one union leader termed it, an "industrial mindset" to the casino and the CAW's casino membership. This equaled framing wages as a share of profits rather than as a response to a competitive labour market. For the CAW, transplanting an industrial mindset to the casino setting during the organization drive and first collective bargaining agreement (1994-1995) seemed possible.<sup>83</sup> This 'mindset' about wage determination drew on the potential of attaining Golden Age wage gains for the casino membership based on a labour-capital compromise of decommodified wages (Esping-Andersen 1990).<sup>84</sup> The CAW leadership assumed that the post-WWII managerial-labour relationship, entitling workers to a share of the profits they generate for their employer, could be brought into the new casino industry in Ontario (Kotz 2007). The expectation that casino workers would enjoy wages like automotive assembly workers rested on the assumption that union representatives could

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<sup>81</sup> Casino and auto workers interviewed have similar membership duration, which equals similar 'union socialization' timeframes. The casino and auto workers I interviewed were hired and became members of the CAW—many within the same Local—during a similar period (see Appendix A).

<sup>82</sup> This time frame represents the initial unionization drive to the seventh and most recent round of collective bargaining between Windsor Casino Ltd. and CAW/Unifor Local 444.

<sup>83</sup> This was especially true given the CAW winning "rich" contracts with the Big Three during 1993 collective bargaining agreement negotiations (Cross 1993c).

<sup>84</sup> Canada's post-war managerial-labour framework—PC 1003, the Rand Formula, and the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigations Act—was a compromise between labour and capital. Labour traded militancy for the right to organize and assented to Taylorism in return for a share of the resulting productivity increases which was a result of labour stability, mechanization, and Taylorism (Fudge and Tucker 2001; Wells 1995a). This compromise lessened the commodification of labour and wages. The UAW was pivotal in creating the labour-capital compromise characteristic of the post-war labour relations. These relations had a dramatic impact on automotive manufacturing employment compensation in Canada (Wells 1995b).

transplant these specific set of labour relations, founded in political struggle, to the “brand new” (read: not to be compared to service and hospitality) gaming industry in Ontario. In fact, the CAW used the newness of the casino industry as a lynchpin to justify wage decommodification, treating casino jobs as a separate from the low and market-oriented wages of service work.

Not only was the CAW’s attempt to base casino wage entitlements on the surplus the casino generates unsuccessful, but the unfulfilled promises and expectations of auto-like wages has had a negative impact on the casino membership’s support for their union. After the first collective bargaining agreement in 1995, the CAW leadership altered its initial rhetoric, resulting in a demobilized and unsupportive casino membership. The casino workers’ neoclassical discourse has demobilized their wage demands. This demobilization—as the CAW leadership retracted its initial ‘share of surplus’ discourse—has come at the cost of the CAW losing the trust and support of the casino membership. In addition to adopting a neoclassical wage entitlement framework, the casino membership questions the will and ability of the union to represent their interests as the casino membership realizes the disconnect between their initial expectations and their current reality.

In short, the CAW took for granted the particular set of labour-management relations set up in the post-WWII period. Politically, the NDP provincial government, by adopting a ‘hands-off’ approach, was pivotal in ensuring that an “industrial mindset” would not flourish in casino employees. The NDP’s non-support was crucial in the CAW’s failed effort to categorize casino jobs as part of a “brand new industry.” Instead, managerial interests prevailed, placing casino jobs within the broader category of service work. Institutionally, with casino jobs referred to as service work, the low sectoral union density in the service sector negatively influenced the ability to create wage benchmarks outside of the market. Union representatives and casino membership now view the CAW’s attempt to bring an “industrial mindset” into the casino as a mistake, naturalizing the link between decommodified wages in automotive manufacturing and the market-oriented wage entitlements of the service sector. The CAW leadership capitulating to the NDP has resulted in unfulfilled expectations and a degree of union organizational failure whereby the casino membership is demobilized and shows low support for their union representation.

Below, I examine the union’s attempt to bring an “industrial mindset” into the casino. I illustrate how automotive assembly and casino workers understand their wage entitlements. I

then draw on the Las Vegas case to show that there is nothing inherent about service work equaling a market-oriented approach to wage entitlements. Next, I look to political and institutional forces to understand why the share of profits mentality did not translate into the casino.

### *Casino Jobs: From Public to Public-Private*

As discussed in Chapter 2, Windsor stakeholders' initial proposal to community members was a provincial government owned and operated casino. Casino workers would either be classified as civil servants or Crown employees. In a non-tipping environment, Windsor casino employees could expect an average annual income of \$41,500 CAD in 1992 (\$61,980.52 CAD in 2015 dollars), reflecting the wages of casino employees at the government owned and operated Winnipeg Crystal Casino (Burnside and Brennan 1992).<sup>85</sup> Like other public servants in Ontario, this workplace would be unionized.

Unlike the initial proposal, the provincial government later decided that the casino would be operated by a public-private partnership between the provincial government and a private consortium. The province would own the building through a new branch of the provincial government called the Ontario Casino Corporation, and a private Nevada group, comprised of Circus Circus, Caesars Entertainment, and Hilton Hotels—under the title Windsor Casino Ltd.—would operate the enterprise. Indeed, on the public grand opening on May 17, 1994, the workforce at Casino Windsor were employees of a Nevada consortium rather than the provincial government.

Windsor Casino Ltd. offered wages to its employees that did not meet the initial promise that Casino Windsor would offer 'good jobs,' like those of Crown employees or like wages at the government owned and operated Winnipeg Crystal Casino. This shortfall left casino workers unhappy. For instance, the local newspaper reported upon Casino Windsor's opening, "the new hirees are fuming about 'minimum wage jobs' [and are] complaining to politicians and the [Windsor] Star that the company has offered them \$7 per hour instead of the \$17 per hour plus benefits they expected" (Vander Doelen 1994). Prior to unionization, the wages at the casino ranged between \$7-12 an hour (Cross 1994d). These lower than anticipated wages acted as a

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<sup>85</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, the original casino plan was modeled on the Winnipeg Crystal Casino, which was owned and operated by the Manitoba provincial government (which, at the time, the NDP also led).

catalyst for the rapid signing of union cards during the unionization drive which began in May 1994.<sup>86</sup> Three unions competed for Casino Windsor membership: the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), and the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) (Cross 1994b).

### *The Expectation of Auto Worker Wages*

Initially, under the aegis that these would be public sector employees, Windsor stakeholders—business, labour, and political leaders—legitimized the casino to the community through the claim that the casino would create good paying jobs for a city in economic decline. With the provincial decision to have a private consortium operate the casino, CAW representatives cultivated the idea that casino employment would mirror automotive assembly wages during the unionization drive and negotiation of the first collective bargaining agreement.

During the unionization drive, the CAW used their collective bargaining agreement successes negotiated with the Big Three (Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler) to persuade casino employees to choose their representation (Cross 1994a). CAW leaders suggested that they would bring their successes from the auto industry to the casino. Undergirding this suggestion was the proposition that wages would not be determined by market forces but be based on a decommodified logic of wage entitlements typical of post-WWII labour-managerial relations. CAW union leaders argued that casino workers were entitled to a proportion of the profits they created for their employer. The *Windsor Star* (Cross 1994b) quoted Dan MacPherson, a CAW organizer, as saying:

‘The casino’s making good money, record profits, and without the input from the workers that wouldn’t be possible’ [...] The lucrative wages and benefits of auto workers might be used as a pattern for casino workers. ‘If the casino industry generates the same kind of profits (as the auto industry), there’s no reason they can’t enjoy the same wages and benefits.’

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<sup>86</sup> Concerning the dissatisfaction with wages, Ken Lewenza, president and leader of CAW Local 444 stated in the *Windsor Star* (1995), “‘Widely touted as the most profitable square footage in the world, the nation’s premier tourist attraction, and on line to generate \$550 million in revenue in the first year of operation, Casino Windsor presently pays wages starting at \$6.92 and average wages of \$9.32 per hour. The average rate returns a weekly total of \$372.80.’”

CAW leaders reiterated the idea that workers' wages should be based on the profits workers make for their employer in a 1994 *Windsor Star* article on the Casino Windsor unionization drive (Cross, 1994a):

[CAW] local 444 led the pattern negotiations with the Big Three auto companies last fall, securing a contract with significant gains without the need for a strike. On Friday, new Local 444 president Ken Lewenza said if the casino workers choose the CAW, his local plans to help workers get a bigger share of the millions of dollars raked in at the casino.

The CAW won the unionization vote to represent casino workers on September 18, 1994, with 80 percent support. The casino membership attributed this victory to the CAW's "long and proud labour history," "community influence," and family ties in the community through the automotive sector (i.e., "With 25,000 members in this area, almost everyone has a mother, a father, a brother or sister who carries a CAW card") (Cross 1994b). During 2014-2015 interviews, casino workers also reflect on and signal that casino employees chose the CAW's representation because of its community presence and bargaining successes. Many also suggest that a major determining factor was the CAW's representation of automotive workers. As Denise, a casino worker, states:

It was the biggest union in Windsor, the most powerful and we thought that they have taken care of the big car industries. [...] And it was Ken Lewenza at the time, and he was the biggest union leader around, he was the one negotiating all the Big Three contracts.

Another casino worker, Samantha, comments:

Because most of our parents worked there, our brothers and sisters worked there, at Chrysler. So, it was an easy fit. And they were a strong union. Right so we thought, 'Oh my God!' That's where we wanted to go. [...] Higher wages, better benefits, I think, and once they got in here, they all thought that we were going to make a \$30 an hour wage like the Chrysler workers.

When the CAW became the official representative of the Casino Windsor workforce, its leadership continued to cultivate the expectation of auto worker wages based on workers being entitled to a share of the employer's profits. Before beginning negotiations for the first collective bargaining agreement, which began on December 16, 1994 (Cross 1994e), the *Windsor Star* (Cross 1994c) reported:

Lewenza was already suggesting that casino workers could end up with wages, benefits, and work rules comparable to those of auto workers, who make \$22 hourly and enjoy a long list of benefits won through years of hard bargaining and strikes. In any industry that makes big profits—be it the car industry or the casino industry—workers are entitled to ask for a share of those profits, Lewenza said, 'The more money they [the casino] make,

then the more money the workers can expect. We're determined to make immediate progress.' [...] The casino takes in \$1.5 million a day. If it continues to make the money it has been making, 'the sky's the limit,' for worker wages, Lewenza said.

Lewenza, Local 444's union president, also held a press conference to prepare the casino membership in anticipation of bargaining the first collective bargaining agreement. The *Windsor Star* (Cross 1994d) reported:

[Lewenza] flashed newspaper clippings that reported the casino's phenomenal financial success. 'We're very confident that management must now understand that it's the workers' turn to share in this incredible profit,' Lewenza said. 'We are looking for significant increases in the hourly wage for everyone.' He said it's not unreasonable for a bartender now earning \$7 an hour to get \$12 or \$13.

Reinforcing the idea that the CAW would be able to provide high wages in sectors outside of the automotive industry, the *Windsor Star* quoted then CAW national president Buzz Hargrove as saying that there's "no expertise the CAW lacks in representing working people. There's nothing magical about experience in a given sector" (Cross 1993a).

During the first bargaining round, the news media and union representatives referred to the casino as "the plant." This reinforced the expectation concerning automotive-like wages and that wages scales should be based on the employer's profits. As the *Windsor Star* reported (Cross 1994e):

Meanwhile, the employees in the plant continue to work under conditions they'd like changed, their representatives say. One of the top demands will be a major wage increase. Their wage range of between \$7 and \$12 an hour should be substantially boosted, by \$5 or \$6 an hour, the workers believe. The casino, which pulls in \$1.5 million a day, should be directing more of its profits towards its employees, the union contends.

It was also evident that membership at Casino Windsor were also buying into the idea of framing wages as a share of surplus. For instance, one casino worker wrote in a *Windsor Star* (Subity 1995) op-ed:

The casino has been profitable for the Las Vegas proprietors, the government of Ontario, and the businesses of Windsor. Why is it that the only ones being dealt out of the profits will be those most responsible for the casino's success, its employees?

Casino Workers also saw themselves as separate from other low-wage service workers. For instance, the *Windsor Star* (Cross 1994c) reported, "Cage cashier Shirley Egan believes her job warrants at least \$15 an hour. 'I mean, they're making that at A&P and I have a heck of a lot of responsibility.'"

The expectation of Golden Age wage rates was based on a post-WWII understanding of ‘what workers deserve’ in relation to the profits being made by the company. The wages casino workers deserved were to be based on their entitlement to a share of company profits which they created instead of their human capital relative to supply and demand. Below, drawing on my interviews, I show how the CAW failed in bringing this “industrial mindset” to the casino by fleshing out how automotive and casino workers frame their wage entitlements.

#### *Auto Workers’ Share of Surplus Model of Wage Determination*

Like the discourse used by union leaders during the casino unionization drive and negotiation of the first collective bargaining agreement (1994-1995), during 2014-2015 interviews, auto workers’ contemporary framing of wage entitlements maintains a decommodified vision. Automotive workers argue that wages should reflect the profits that workers create for the employer. For instance, Dom, an automotive worker, reflects on his wage, saying, “You know the company succeeded because of its workers, they are the ones that make the company’s profit.” Another auto worker, Victor, contends:

They are making a billion dollars because we are building a decent product. If we are not building it and not doing our jobs, they would not be selling a billion [...] but if *we* are making a billion dollars, why shouldn’t the next contract we get a raise? If *we*’ve just made the company a billion dollars? (emphasis added)

Using “we,” Victor sees the profits made by the employer as indivisible from the employee’s labour. Another auto worker, Cheryl, argues that higher wages should be expected across industries since companies are making their profits “off the backs” of workers. She says, “You have the right to expect more from an employer. They’re making billions of dollars in every industry off your backs, and they give you a measly \$7 an hour? I mean, it’s pathetic.” With a notion of wages based on the labour-capital compromise, auto workers argue that this precedent ought to be extended beyond automotive to other industries, like the casino. As Steven, an automotive worker, states:

Could casino workers make more? Yeah, they could. Because if the casino is making X amount, and they’re Caesar Windsor now. So, it’s a Caesars corporation. There is billions of dollars made, have you been to Vegas? Look at Caesars, I mean that there is money.

For auto workers, wages are connected to the “billions” of dollars of profit their employer generates. Workers link their labour to their employer’s profits, suggesting that workers ought to

be entitled to more of the wealth they create. For instance, Matt, an auto worker, draws on the employer's profit generation plus the bonuses given to top executives, saying, "The Company does make billions of dollars. [...] When the owner or the manager of Chrysler gets a \$20 million bonus, that's part of my pie too. Like if he can get it, so can I." Indeed, Matt questions the amount paid to top executives relative to workers' wages. Other workers connect the profits generated by the employer, executive pay, and the percentage of labour costs in understanding the determination of wages. For instance, Anne, an automotive worker, discusses how profits are made "off the backs" of workers while connecting the cost of building the product to the rate of surplus the company is creating:

Every vehicle that comes off the line makes a \$5,000 profit. \$5,000 profit off 1,500 vans per day. They rake in a lot of money. So when the company attacks the union and workers' wages, it is a very infuriating to hear, because we are less than 10 percent of the cost in making \$5,000 profit on each minivan. [...] 5,000 x 1,500, just say \$7.5 million a day, they are making off the backs of 3,200 people. [...] I just think that is a complete bunk argument, we deserve [our wages], and people in society deserve that. We don't deserve to have corporations take away the profits, we don't deserve to have CEOs making 451 times more than we do in the first hour of the day. I think it is a false argument. I think it is put there as part of a neoliberal agenda to get rid of the union more than it is to enlighten the population.

When speaking about wages, auto workers are also critical of the "loss of the middle-class" and growing polarization of wages in the more general labour market. For instance, Joseph takes on a Keynesian-like framework, saying:

Since 1970, the middle-class wages have become less and less. [...] The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few is the destruction of the economy in the long run because you won't have people to purchase goods and services. It will just become a different kind of a system where goods and services are provided for the poor, like Wal-Mart and stuff like that. And then there will be small groups of people that are providing goods and services for the super-rich.

Relatedly, auto workers also see their wages as contributing to the viability of the local economy, producing a "trickle-down effect." Indeed, auto workers view their wages as essential to community spinoffs. As Tim states, "We are the standard of what the middle-class should be. [...] Someone's gotta make the money to spend the money. [...] We are the trickle-down effect." Dom, an automotive worker who participates in union education courses offered by the CAW/Unifor, also references "the race to the bottom," the disappearance of the middle-class, and wealth distribution, saying:



The race to the bottom is alive and well. [...] The gap between the have and have nots is ever expanding, the middle-class is disappearing. I've written many papers and a term I like to use is that 'We are an endangered species.' Absolutely, the middle-class is an endangered species. [...] The government signs these trade policies, allowing these corporations to simply pull out of the country with no repercussions, with nothing to benefit the community, it's just 'Bye, bye, see you later.' That's absolutely wrong. You put your life into what you do, there are always ups and downs, things are cyclical but I believe in the idea of sharing the wealth.

These findings demonstrate that auto workers believe that wages should be determined as a share of employers' profits. This mindset frames wage entitlements beyond the neoclassical vision of wage rates and rests on a decommodified entitlement to surplus. This mirrors the CAW leadership's discourse during the casino unionization drive and negotiations of the first collective bargaining agreement. Automotive workers' framing of wage entitlements also reflects the success of the education programs offered by the CAW/Unifor as automotive workers offer sophisticated economic analyses of wages, profits, and the distribution of income. Indeed, what we see on the surface (i.e., auto workers' "industrial mindset") is the result of institutional (strong unions) and ideological (union education) factors. Next, I examine why casino workers do not frame wages as a share of surplus.

### *Casino Workers' Market Theory of Wage Determination*

Casino workers have difficulty seeing anything beyond the market as determining their wages. This is in contrast to union representatives and casino workers' discourse used in the initial stages of the casino, when they were demanding compensation relative to profit generation. For instance, Carl comments on his shift in perspective over the years, losing this sense of 'entitlement':

For the work that I do? \$18 and a half an hour. 10 years ago I would probably say, 'They should pay me \$5 more an hour,' but most people don't make \$19 an hour or 18 and a half an hour in a kitchen. Like I run dishes back and forth between a kitchen or I wash them so...

Comparing himself to others in the service sector, Carl experienced a declining sense of 'entitlement' for a higher wage. Relatedly, Karen suggests that fellow casino workers ought to be "intelligent enough" to compare their wages to those in their sector, saying:

You have to be intelligent enough to be able to compare. So, a server here and a server out there. And what's the difference in a bartender and a cashier? So, I am going to be a

cashier at Taco Bell and I am going to make minimum wage, not going to make \$19 an hour. So, comparatively, how can you say that this is not fair?

Sandra, a casino worker, also emphasizes that wages at the casino are quite good especially compared to other service sector workplaces:

Yeah, I think the casino's pretty fair in their pay. At one point, it was when they were making really good money, there was a feeling that they [employer] weren't sharing. But I think that with maturity comes the knowledge that in looking out in the workforce outside of the casino we're paid really well. [...] When you look at room cleaners at the Hilton compared to what our room cleaners make, they make phenomenal money or when a customer service rep in another place wouldn't make what I make. We're paid really well. [...] I think that doing my job and the income that I am making is sufficient.

Diane, a casino worker, also compares her wage to other low-wage service sector employment, saying, "There is no way you can find anything, like a grocery store, that will pay you that much. So relative to other places, it's a good wage."

Unlike automotive workers, casino workers assess their wages based on their and their coworkers' human capital. This difference in framing is despite both casino and auto workers having similar educational attainment (i.e., most having completed high school) (see Appendix D for the Educational Attainment of Casino and Automotive Workers). Indeed, casino workers do not frame their wages based on the revenue *they* create for their employer, but rather frame their wages relative to the human capital they offer and compared to non-union workers in the same sector. Given the education and skills needed in the workplace, casino workers see their wages as "fair." Chris, a casino worker, comments on the "appreciation" casino workers have for their employment relative to their education attainment:

I look at it like, I am not that educated. So, I have a great job. A server, for instance, she is like 'Hey I'm making \$16, \$15 an hour, \$14 per hour.' Even if I was full-time somewhere else, I am not going to have what we make. [...] So, I am sure people appreciate what they have.

Anne, a casino worker, also discusses that casino workers are well-paid given the minimal prerequisites of qualifying for employment, saying, "I think for our job and for what we do and for the requirements to get in, it's absolutely well-paid."

Casino workers not only understand their wages as relative to the broader service sector and to the skillset they offer, but the casino workforce also makes comparisons to the wages paid by casinos in the United States. While misinformed about the unionization of casinos and casino

workers' compensation in the US, especially in Nevada, Dan discusses Casino Windsor wages relative to "industry standard":

It's not the industry standard, you don't make that [automotive] kind of money. And casinos out there, they make min[imum] wage, they don't make money like we make. [...] Out in Nevada, because we are unionized here in Canada, but the gaming industry in the States, they don't make the money that we make, from everything that I've read anyway. [...] They [Local 444] don't get more money out of the Chrysler management because they are the Chrysler's union. They get more money out of Chrysler's management because there is more money there to get. They have more reasons to get more money. This company says, 'This is industry standard, this is what we are going to give you.' It's hard to argue that when it's industry standard. They don't just pull magic money out of the sky.

Casino workers' framing of wage entitlements is in stark contrast to automotive workers who often discuss the product they create and the profit it produces. Automotive workers deploy a vocabulary which grounds their logic of entitlement to the profit they create for their employer. In contrast, casino workers do not see themselves as producing a 'product.' Instead, casino workers see themselves as producing an 'experience' for clientele, like a dealer "playing cards." For instance, Rick, comments on the fairness of his wage, saying:

For what I do, it is reasonable. [...] When you think about it, we make good money for what we do. We play cards, I mean let us be honest. Anybody who wanted to do that job, could do that job. It is not like that is a skillset that is unique or something. That you need ample amounts of training to do. It is like really, anybody can do that job.

In contrast to automotive workers, casino workers do not seem to have the language to quantify the amount of profit they create for the employer, despite many of them seeing and physically handling the millions of dollars passing through the casino. For instance, Dan discusses the distinction between producing a product and an experience:

Because you are producing something that people can use or are going to use. We don't produce anything here. All we do is take money and give people that... So you give me \$5 and I let you think that you are a very special person and that this is where you want to be with the glitz and glamour and that goes along with being in a casino. [...] So that is all that is, we don't think about how much money casinos make and produce nothing.

Indeed, casino workers' 'service mind' reflects findings from Livingstone and Scholtz (2016) where workers producing an 'experience' rather than a visible good have difficulty seeing the

surplus they create. In contrast, workforces, like automotive assembly, visibly create a tangible product which is converted into profit. This lends itself to workers moving beyond a market-determined wage framework (Livingstone and Scholtz 2016).

Nevertheless, many casino workers are also in a position to directly see the profits, or at least large sums of money, passing through the casino. Based on this logic, the ‘share of profits’ mentality is not beyond the reach of casino workers. For instance, Heather comments, “I mean I do the money drops and I remember back when they were making crazy money. [...] And it’s still one of the most profitable casinos.” Relatedly, Jessica, states:

I mean I’ve counted out \$25,000 in cash or however much, \$50,000 dollars in cash. You don’t even think about it. One player, he is allowed to bet the max which we have a \$50,000 limit. And I think to myself every now and then, like it doesn’t bother me, but I think, ‘You’re one hand, the two seconds that it took... It’s more than I make in a year.’ And then I am like ‘Wow, it must be nice to be in your shoes’ [*laughs*].

Here, Jessica focuses on the disposable income of the patron rather than the profits being generated for the casino.

Casino workers express gratitude for their wages and having employment. This is a result of understanding wages as based on the skillset they offer, combined with comparing their wages to others in the service sector while not having the language to ground how what they ‘produce’ creates a surplus. For instance, Patty comments:

I have seen people worse and I know a lot of people would jump at this job. Like my neighbour would die for this job. Just the benefits alone. So, I am grateful. I guess it comes down to the fact that I am grateful I have it.

A couple, Kate and Ryan, who work at the casino also express gratitude for their wages relative to other service sector workplaces and for having employment. Kate says, “The income is good, it is better than other people in bars and restaurants, so we are grateful for our income.” Jeff also states, “I’m just happy to have a job really.” Another casino worker, Isabelle, criticizes the high expectations of her peers and suggests replacing it with thankfulness. She says, “Some of them do think we should be where auto employees are, so I just look at it like, ‘You should be thankful that you have a job.’” Heather, a casino worker, also references “the real world” in her comments about her appreciation for their wages. She states:

I think we make good money for what we do, compared to what other people who work make out, we call it, ‘The real world.’ [*laughs*] A lot of us say, ‘Out in the real world.’ [...] So, we make good money for what we do. [...] But if you work for Joe Blow’s

family business, you don't have that. And if he says you're not working tomorrow, you're not working tomorrow. And you don't get paid. So, we make good money for what we do.

In sum, casino workers frame their wages quite differently than automotive workers despite being part of the same union—and many the same Local—and becoming members during a similar timeframe. The “industrial mindset” CAW union representatives attempted to bring to the casino is in stark contrast to the casino membership’s contemporary framing of wage entitlements based on human capital and intra-service sector comparisons. Below, I provide evidence of union representatives and casino workers post-hoc re-evaluation of the initial attempt to frame wages at Casino Windsor based on a share of surplus approach, admitting that such an attempt was misguided.

### *Unrealistic Expectations*

*I am not an auto worker [...] we are not auto workers. – Betty, Casino Worker*

Reflecting on the demands made and the expectations cultivated, union representatives—some of whom were involved in creating those expectations 20 years earlier—and casino workers now concede that attempting to bring an “industrial mindset” to the casino was a mistake. Rick, a casino worker, states, it was “unrealistic.” Union representatives and casino workers have naturalized the disconnect between casino jobs, and service sector jobs more broadly, and wage decommodification. Indeed, the CAW leadership and casino membership see the attempt to bring a share of surplus model of wage entitlements to the casino as a misstep.

In my interviews with union representatives and casino workers, the idea that service sector workers could receive wages comparable to auto industry workers is framed as misguided. In fact, a union official cites “the industrial mindset” as “getting in the way” and creating an unrealistic expectation for service workers, who now ought to understand their wages from a market-based perspective. This is reflected in my interviews with the union leadership, some of whom were instrumental in creating these initial expectations during the unionization drive and negotiations of the casino’s first collective bargaining agreement. For instance, Tom, a former CAW union leader, states:

You know we took our *industrial mentality* to this new industry, and that wasn't... after the strike [1995]<sup>87</sup> [...] we knew what we couldn't achieve in this industry. And we couldn't treat it like a GM, Ford, or Chrysler, or any of our auto parts companies. We had to treat it based on the occupations within that large employment workplace. So how much more were servers making in a comparison to servers on the outside? How much were cage cashiers making in comparison to somebody working in a bank? [...] Our *industrial mind* delayed us getting a collective agreement for a little while. (emphasis added)

Tom describes the “industrial mentality” as causing difficult labour relations that resulted in the subsequent strike during negotiations for the first collective bargaining agreement. Top union representatives have internalized and naturalized the link between manufacturing jobs and wage decommodification, a link which is seen as no longer a match in the service sector. Now, union leaders suggest that intra-service sector wage comparisons are more appropriate. Another union leader, Denis, also echoes this sentiment, stating:

Recognizing that ‘Hey, the average wage for a service sector worker is about 14 bucks an hour, 13 bucks an hour. We’re like \$5 off, asking \$5 more. Wow.’ Then you got to go back to the membership and say, ‘You know what, the \$19 we talked about wasn’t really realistic, because that’s more automotive and you’re more here.’ So, we’ve learned that we need to put ourselves into their [employers] shoes, be more empathetic and understanding what they’re being dealt, and what they’re dealing with, and how they fit into their sector of the economy.

These reflections from union representatives, some from the same representatives who created the initial expectations, show how the framing of casino workers’ wage entitlements shifted. Union representatives now understand that, instead of casino workers being entitled to employer profits, wages should be compared to wage scales in the service industry.

Thinking back on negotiations for the casino’s first collective bargaining agreement and the subsequent strike, the former labour leader, Tom, goes on to state:

We had a very lengthy strike, and it was a very very tough time for the union in particular, because Casino Windsor was brought here with high expectations. At that particular time, which was the interim casino, business was enormous. I mean people were lined up on a Friday and Saturday night, around the block to get inside the interim casino. And the revenue and profits that was generated for the province and the consortium were significant. And we, as a union, always thought that the wages that were

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<sup>87</sup> In 1995, there was a 27-day strike which centered on wages during the negotiation of the first collective bargaining agreement.

initially implemented at the casino, in every classification, over 60 classifications, were low-balled. So, we had high expectations and I can tell you 25 years later, our expectations were much higher than our ability to negotiate those expectations. You know, we went into the casino with the expectation that we were going break barriers in a number of areas.

A current union leader, Denis, also comments on how creating these expectations in casino workers was a mistake:

Listen, we made a number of errors. We, in essence, increased their expectation level. It's a challenge, right? And I'm not blaming anybody, I'm saying that once you establish the fact that you're going to generate 2-3,000, 4,000 jobs, you can't stand in front of a podium and say, 'You know what, these jobs should generate \$19-20 an hour.' [...] So when Ken is standing up and there's 2,000 people in the audience, he says 'You guys deserve \$19 because that's the average wage of an auto sector, independent parts facility,' it wasn't the same ... it didn't go well.

A top executive at Casino Windsor also comments on these expectations, suggesting that there was an attempt to put "an auto plant mentality" into the casino. He states, "It's tough, I would say that they're totally different industries. I think trying to put an auto plant mentality in a casino is difficult and I think that's what the early stuff was [labour relations conflict]. Now we are all much better at it."

Casino workers also suggest that it was misguided to promise auto worker wages and to attempt to transplant an "industrial mindset" into the casino. For instance, one casino worker sarcastically comments on how casino workers, as a result of signing with the CAW, thought that they would be "living the high life." Devin states:

We were organized by a very prominent and powerful union that represents the automotive industries, so I think a lot of people that were making \$6 to \$9 an hour thought, 'Bingo! This is our jackpot!' So signing up with these guys [Local 444], we will walk out with \$25 wages and will be living the high life.

Carl, a casino worker, comments on these "unrealistic" expectations as connected to the city's automotive union history, saying, "It's an auto town, so people think that if you get an auto union you are going to get auto worker wages. But it's not how it goes." Jessica, a casino worker, also comments on this misconception, saying, "The expectations that the employees had, there was a misconception that we were going to make everything that the automotive workers were going to make. Why aren't we making 35 bucks an hour?" Another casino worker, Mike, more cynically comments on how the casino's gaming floor is referred to as the "shop floor," saying:

Just that some even call it ‘the shop floor.’ Sometimes they’ll refer to the casino gaming floor as the shop floor because I hear some of my [union] reps say ‘Jesus, it’s not a shop floor!’ I just think some of the approaches we take were a little more grey collar.<sup>88</sup> [...] I think when our [union] president comes into a high profile meeting and does one of these [bangs fist on table] or uses some colourful language. I think that was a new kind of thing for them [management] [*laughs*]. [...] I think our people, our union, the execs, vice presidents, presidents etc. came in with an automotive mentality and tried to make that fit on to the casino template and I think that caused a lot of problems early on.

Indeed, this worker highlights how the “grey collar” style of bargaining did not translate in the casino environment. Another casino worker, Denise, comments on casino workers’ expectation as “stupid,” saying, “They expected to get paid the same as the auto workers were paid. Stupid.” Diane, a casino worker, also comments on how this was an unrealistic expectation, saying:

The expectations from our union was greater than what it should have been because I think they directly link Local 444 with Ford and Chrysler, and we deserve what they got because that’s the union we have, and it really doesn’t work that way, right. [...] I think back in the day, the union thought that they were going to do business the same way that they have done it in the Big Three and it doesn’t work like that. It is totally different in the industry. Totally different.

Relatedly, casino workers describe the transition of the casino membership’s expectations away from auto worker wages—or more precisely, away from viewing themselves as entitled to the employer’s profits—as a “maturing” and “learning” process. Devin, a casino worker, states:

The workers, they have matured, they have gotten a little bit wiser to the things around because 20 years ago, we were 20 years younger. Some of us were late teens or early 20s, they had a lot of lofty expectations regarding money and respect. [...] 20 years later, I think they have matured in a sense...

Sandra, a casino worker, also discusses the rising “maturity” of the workforce as connected to more realistic wage expectations:

Well, I think that the maturity has set in. So, the realization of the Big Three is here [*raises right hand*] and we’re here [*raises left hand under right*] ... we’re not, just because we are under the same Local... It is different, we have different work, different expectations ...

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<sup>88</sup> When asked what he meant by “grey collar,” Mike stated that “grey collar” represented union officials’ dealings with casino management—which he conceived as more “white collar” employment—was more automotive-like, therefore making the “white collar” a little dirty. This included union representatives swearing and being more “rough around the edges” during meetings/negotiations with management.



Similarly, Carl, a casino worker, comments on workers' expectations lowering through time, saying, "The level of expectation has changed, as people come in, people get older, your outlook changes I suppose." Another casino worker, Patty, comments on how it was unrealistic for casino employees to believe that they would "rule" the workplace, while being sympathetic to the employer's desire to "run its business." Here, Patty discusses the curtailing of expectations and limiting the scope of the union's duties to simply "preventing abuse." Patty states:

It was the high pay, I think they [casino workers] thought the employees would rule. But I still come back to the fact that Caesars has the right to run its business how it wants. The union can't tell it how to run, it is just there to prevent us from being abused.

Casino workers also frame the expectation of auto worker wages as resulting from workers having a sense of entitlement. With "education"—meaning educating workers to look at the situation from the employer's interests—Diane explains how to manage these expectations. She states:

With education [...] I think it's this whole mentality of entitlement, I am entitled, until you question them and you spin it the other way. Like if you owned a business [...] So, when you spin it around they kind of get it. But there is still a sense of entitlement, but I don't know if it is as bad as it used to be.

Another casino worker, Dan, associates these expectations with workers' greed, a greed which compares to the greed of the employer. He says:

You want greed?! That's greed. Honestly, my co-members of the Local, because we were the Automotive Union they automatically assumed that they would fight and get us \$25, \$26 an hour. And it is so funny because the company is very monetary. Everything is about money to them. And it holds true to the employees as well. Every time they have gone for contracts it is always been about money. 'I want to be paid \$25 instead of \$18' ... 'Well you do it for Ford!' But we don't work for Ford. There is a lot of expectations from the members that because they [the Local] got so much for Ford, that they are going to do for us.

It is evident that the union's attempt to bring an "industrial mentality" based on tying workers' wage entitlements to employer's profits has not materialized in the casino workplace. Instead, high auto-like wages in the service sector are considered a mismatch, while the link between decommodified wages and automotive manufacturing is naturalized. Nonetheless, there is no inherent reason for Casino Windsor workers to frame wage entitlements from a market-oriented perspective. To substantiate this, drawing on secondary literature, I examine the

counterfactual case of Las Vegas which demonstrates a decommodified understanding of wage entitlements is possible in the casino industry.

### *Las Vegas Casinos: A Counterfactual Case*

Despite the common sense assumption that there may be something inevitable or inherent to casino workers, and service workers more broadly, adopting a neoclassical approach to framing wages, the counterfactual case of Las Vegas provides evidence that framing wages as a share of surplus is possible in the casino industry. The Las Vegas case challenges the common-sense explanation that Casino Windsor workers adopt a market-oriented perspective as a result of being part of a low-density service sector where casino workers see their jobs as comparatively high-wage. Las Vegas casino workers have successfully imposed a ‘share of surplus’ model of wage determination, despite much of the service sector remaining non-union. The Las Vegas case provides prime evidence that there is nothing inherent about the link between service work and the market determination model of wages while the non-union service sector does not serve as a frame of reference for casino jobs in Las Vegas. Indeed, Las Vegas shows that a ‘share of profits’ approach to wage determination can work in the service sector.

In 2004, union density in Las Vegas was approximately 65 percent while density on the Las Vegas Strip was even higher at 90 percent (Benz 2004). On the Las Vegas Strip and downtown, virtually all non-managerial employees in hotel-casinos are unionized (Waddoups and Eade 2013). In contrast to the market-oriented framing of wage entitlements by Casino Windsor union representatives and workers, the Culinary Union (UNITE HERE Local 226) representatives subscribe to a ‘share of profits’ framing of wage entitlements. For instance, during 2007 collective bargaining agreement negotiations between the Culinary Union Local 226 and MGM Mirage, the *Las Vegas Sun* quoted a union representative as stating, “What’s right is what we’re doing. What’s wrong is what the corporations are doing. [...] We don’t mind them making lots of money. They just have to learn how to share it” (Mishak 2007). In fact, during 2007 collective bargaining, the Culinary Union proposed that workers ought to be entitled to profits through an earnings sharing agreement where wages would factor-in MGM Mirage’s

growth (Mishak 2007).<sup>89</sup> This ‘share of profits’ mentality did not end at framing only their membership’s wages. For instance, the *Las Vegas Sun* (Mishak 2010) reported:

Northern Nevada electrical workers brought a bitter contract fight with NV Energy to Las Vegas this week, picketing the utility’s corporate headquarters to draw attention to the protracted negotiations. The powerful Culinary Union lent weight to the demonstration, with hundreds of casino workers marching alongside electrical workers in the rain, demanding that the utility share its profits with employees. [...] D. Taylor, secretary-treasurer of the Culinary, said curbing workers’ benefits is unfair, given that NV Energy reported \$182 million in net profits last year, bolstered by a rate increase, and is set to receive millions in federal stimulus dollars for development projects.

Like workers at Casino Windsor, casino workers in Las Vegas also experience relatively better incomes than other workers in similar service sector occupations (Waddoups 2002). Yet, in contrast to CAW Local 444 and its Casino Windsor membership, casino union representatives and workers in Las Vegas also demonstrate a decommodified framing of wage entitlements. This comparison shows that there is nothing inherent to casino workers—or service workers, for that matter—adopting a market-oriented understanding of wage entitlements, regardless of whether the workforce creates a product or an experience. Instead, political and institutional forces impact whether workers adopt a market-oriented or share of profits understanding of wage entitlements.

Since there is no inherent logic to this perceived mismatch, I turn to the political and institutional forces shaping the casino membership’s perception of their wage entitlements. I examine the *Windsor Star*’s coverage of last seven collective bargaining agreement negotiations (1995; 1998; 2001; 2004; 2008; 2011 and; 2014) to identify where this possible disjuncture—from the possibility of bringing an “industrial mindset” to the ‘reality’ of a ‘service mindset’—occurred. While blame is placed in contemporary accounts on the union leaders and the “stupid” expectations of the workers, I find that political and institutional forces impacted the CAW’s ability to frame wages beyond market forces. In attempting to superimpose the decommodified vision of wage rates on to the casino, CAW representatives took for granted a particular set of industrial relations found in automotive assembly that were created during the post-war era. In addition, central to the CAW’s demands for decommodified wage entitlements was the disconnect of casino jobs from the service sector, with the idea that it was a “brand new

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<sup>89</sup> While profit sharing is typical in labour contracts—usually taking the form of an annual bonus based on a company’s performance—it is unprecedented to propose linking a wage formula to a company’s growth.

industry” in Ontario. Politically, I find the NDP provincial government’s unwillingness to intervene—as the CAW expected—when negotiating the first collective bargaining agreement worked to sideline the CAW’s attempt to transplant the share of surplus model into this “new industry.” Institutionally, with casino jobs classified as service work instead of part of a “brand new industry,” casino jobs were placed in the low union density and low-wage service sector. This further constrained the CAW and its membership from adopting alternative wage entitlement benchmarks.

*Political Constraints: The New Democratic Party of Ontario*

*It might be hard for casino management to swallow the CAW’s financial demands. Some U.S. companies take the attitude that workers should just be glad they have a job. ‘That attitude should be left across the border,’ Parent [CAW Local 444, financial secretary] said. – Cross 1994d, reporter from the Windsor Star*

Union leaders and casino workers suggest, in their interviews, that CAW leaders and casino workers were misguided in expecting wages similar to the automotive industry. Casino Windsor union representatives and casino workers have adopted a neoclassical understanding of wage entitlements in the casino industry. Drawing on the local news media, however, I find that the expectation of auto worker wages did not materialize, not simply because of ‘misguided’ expectations, but rather because the provincial NDP government did not intervene or mediate in the negotiating process between labour and capital in a manner which the CAW anticipated. The NDP stepped aside during the first round of collective bargaining between Windsor Casino Ltd. and the CAW when the CAW expected the NDP to step-in. Not only did the provincial government step aside, but it actively pressured the CAW to ‘rethink’ (read: lower) its wage demands.

Key to the “industrial mindset” not transferring was the NDP provincial government not publicly weighing in on the ideological debate waged between Windsor Casino Ltd. and the CAW. This ideological divide centered on whether the frame of reference for Casino Windsor wages ought to be the low-wage service sector (managerial interest) or a “new industry” in Ontario with wage benchmarks yet to be established (CAW interest). I find that the position taken by the NDP in the first round of collective bargaining between Windsor Casino Ltd. and CAW Local 444 was pivotal in defusing the potential of transposing an “industrial mindset” to this ‘postindustrial’ service workforce. The provincial government holds the key to the valued

resource (gaming licenses) for which corporations compete. The provincial government also has the ability to retract these licenses from an operator. Given the provincial government's power here, it did have the opportunity to intervene on the CAW's side and significantly alter the outcome of negotiations. In addition, as a result of the public-private agreement, the provincial government absorbs much of the labour costs at Casino Windsor (Cross 1995c). Indeed, the provincial government was a key player in determining the form wage entitlements would take at Casino Windsor. In this context, if the NDP government had intervened in the CAW's favour, one could reasonably expect that the CAW would have been successful in framing wage entitlements as a share of surplus in this "brand new industry."

As I evince below, the NDP provincial government not intervening publicly, while informally pressuring the CAW to alter its demands, effectively compromised the potential to frame wages rates as a share of surplus at Casino Windsor, and potentially, the broader service sector. As a result, in all consecutive collective bargaining rounds, the CAW leadership in the local news media no longer framed casino workers as being entitled to the profits of the employer. In subsequent negotiations, not only is there an evident decrease in public announcements concerning expectations and demands by the CAW leadership in the *Windsor Star*, but when there were announcements, casino workers' wages were not framed as being based on the employer's profits.

#### *First Collective Bargaining Agreement Negotiations: Demands and Offers*

Negotiations for the first collective bargaining agreement (1994-1995) began with a massive gap between the union's wage demands and Casino Windsor's offer. The union demanded a 100 percent wage increase in some classifications and double digit increases in others, while Windsor Casino Ltd. offered a six percent wage increase over three years. Given this chasm, a strike seemed inevitable. Commenting on the casino's initial offer, the *Windsor Star* (Cross 1995a) reported:

Canadian Auto Workers Local 444 president Ken Lewenza was seething Tuesday after the casino made its first monetary offer to the 1,800 casino workers negotiating a first contract. 'We are absolutely disgusted,' he said, reporting that the casino had offered wage increases of two percent a year for three years. That amounts to a 20 cent per hour annual increase for an average worker, who's making much less than the casino can afford and the worker deserves, the union says. 'We consider this an embarrassment,' said Lewenza.

Echoing their Local president, casino workers were quoted in the *Windsor Star* that the employer's offer was "disgusting" and "ridiculous" (Vander Doelen and Crawford 1995).

Despite the seeming gulf between wage demands and offers, the CAW Local president was cited in the *Windsor Star* (Cross 1995b), commenting on the minuteness of such differences relative to casino generated revenue:

The difference between what the union wants and what the company offers is about \$42 million over three years, a sum the casino can make up in 30 days of operation, Lewenza argued. 'We're striking over peanuts when you're talking about the casino's revenue.' No one at the casino has said the union demands will break the casino, he said. Casino officials say that the union demands are outrageous and are unjustified for a business that fits itself in with a hospitality sector that typically pays lower wages than factories.

Indeed, the battle over models of wage determination maps onto the class divide, where the union is arguing for the 'share of surplus' model while the employer is arguing for the 'market determination' model.

The union and employer were deeply divided. The union—seeking to decommodify wages—argued that workers, like those in the automotive industry, deserve to reap the rewards of the profits they help create. In contrast, the employer argued that wages must be comparable to other casinos—to compete with the potential Detroit casinos—and to the service sector. For instance, the *Windsor Star's* Cross (1995d) reported:

The casino had wanted to keep wages down to hospitality-industry levels, in order to be competitive with future casinos. The CAW rejected that argument outright, asserting this was a brand new Ontario industry making wads of money, and that workers deserved a bigger share of the revenue. This 'philosophical difference' kept the sides so far apart. [...] The union called for provincial intervention, and went so far as to call for the ouster of these American casino operators. Casino president John O'Brien responded angrily to the union's 'ugly American' characterizations.

Indeed, "the philosophical difference" boiled down to the framing of wage entitlements. While the union believed that workers' wages should reflect the "wads of money" the employer enjoyed, Windsor Casino Ltd. argued that wages offered needed to be competitive with other service sector workplaces and casinos, particularly in the US. As Lewenza said in the *Windsor Star* (Sinkevitch 1995), "In all of my experience with negotiating, I'd never seen a collective bargaining strategy like the one they used,' Lewenza said. 'Every time we brought up the topic of economics [wages], they brought up the comparison with US workers.'"

With the union's final demand of a 38 percent wage increase and Windsor Casino Ltd. offering 11 percent over three years, there was overwhelming strike support from the Casino Windsor membership. This strike mandate serves as additional evidence that the casino workers themselves were prepared to adopt a share of surplus conception of wage determination. With over 60 percent of the casino membership in attendance and a vote of 1,111 to 22 in favour of giving their bargaining committee strike authorization, casino workers went on strike on March 9, 1995 (Vander Doelen and Crawford 1995).

*(Dis)Connecting from the Service Sector*

The CAW's strategy within negotiations and during the strike was to disconnect from the broader service sector, arguing that casino jobs were part of a brand new industry and therefore the market-oriented wage entitlements of the broader non-union service sector need not apply. The CAW also reminded the NDP provincial government of their own statements that casino gaming was a "brand new industry," meaning that wages should not be compared to the service sector. The *Windsor Star* (Vander Doelen 1995b) reported, "The CAW quotes from provincial documents written before the casino opened, saying gaming is a 'brand new industry' in Ontario, so the wages it pays should not be tied to an old industry such as hospitality." George King, Casino Windsor's chief negotiator, replied to whether Casino Windsor jobs were part of the service sector, saying in the *Windsor Star*, "'Yeah, it's a new industry in Ontario, but it's part of hospitality'" (Cross 1995f). Windsor's then mayor also summarized the CAW's attempt to disconnect casino jobs from the low-wage service sector and the managerial interest in classifying casino jobs within the service sector in the *Windsor Star* (Vander Doelen 1995a):

'I believe the Windsor Casino Limited organization feels this particular industry and the wages should be influenced by the service industry,' [mayor Mike] Hurst said. 'The CAW believes this is a brand new industry and a whole new category should be created.'

Indeed, the ability to get casino workers and the public to adopt the share of surplus model hinged on being able to portray casino jobs as fundamentally different from other service sector jobs. Not only did Windsor Casino Ltd. and the NDP push back against this model, but, as reported in the *Windsor Star* (Vander Doelen 1995c), managerial interests from the broader service sector also fought against and feared the precedent this model at the casino would set:

The service industry in Windsor and far beyond is nervously awaiting the outcome of the strike at Casino Windsor, says the president of the Ontario Restaurant Association. The

industry fears how much the eventual settlement will cost if the CAW succeeds in its quest to establish a new wage ‘benchmark’ for service jobs. ‘Everyone is mortified,’ says Thom Racovitis, the well-known city restaurateur who is president of the ORA and the Windsor-Essex Supply Network. ‘There’s a lot more at stake in this than just Casino Windsor,’ he said Friday after fielding worried calls from restaurant owners and managers from across Ontario. If casino workers get the wages they are demanding, Racovitis said, restaurants, bars, hotels, and retailers will be hard pressed to keep up. [...] If they succeed winning a 38 percent wage increase for their work – ‘which is basically an unskilled job. There’s not much more to it than preparing fast food at McDonalds’ – it could have far-reaching consequences for Ontario restaurants, he said. ‘That will become a benchmark, not just for the casino industry but the whole service industry,’ Racovitis said. ‘We don’t have gaming revenues to pay those kind of wages. We don’t have those kinds of margins. The industry can’t carry it,’ he said of the CAW’s wage demands. [...] Racovitis says the US companies that operate Casino Windsor are also wise to be worried about setting a wage precedent in Windsor that could spread to the casinos they run elsewhere in the world. ‘They can afford it here, but they can’t afford the chain reaction.’

Commenting on the potential ‘ripple effect’ of Casino Windsor setting a new wage benchmark, CAW Local 89 president stressed in a *Windsor Star* (Jenner 1995) op-ed that the casino industry was a “new industry”:

Many fear there will be a ripple effect on the hospitality sector if the workers’ demands for higher wages are met. These fears are unfounded as the casino industry is an entirely new sector of the Ontario economy. The gaming industry is not related to the industrial or hospitality industry but any sector that boasts about revenues of \$1.5 million per day should be prepared to pay their workers decent wages and benefits.

The CAW’s strategy to disconnect casino jobs from the low-wage service sector by portraying casino jobs as part of a “brand new industry” was pivotal in arguing for a share of surplus wage model rather than one based on market forces. Management, in contrast, with an interest in attaining a market-oriented model, argued that casino jobs were part of the broader service sector.

#### *NDP Provincial Government: Smothering Decommodification*

As a result of this ideological struggle, a 27-day strike ensued. As reported in the *Windsor Star* (Cross 1995b), the strike had a negative effect on provincial coffers, “The milk that has flowed at a rate of \$1.4 million a day from this Ontario cash cow suddenly dried up, the result of the vast gap between company wage offers and the expectations of 1,800 workers.” During negotiations and the strike that followed, the provincial government declared that they would not intervene. The announcement of this ‘hands-off’ policy was in spite of the provincial



government almost completely absorbing labour costs at the casino instead of the employer. As reported in the *Windsor Star* (Cross 1995c):

Ontario Casino Corporation spokesman Bill Gillies said the government would be affected most by any increase in labour costs. ‘It would be safe to say that for every \$1 increase in cost, 90 cents of that would be less revenue for the province,’ he said. But Gillies said the province has no plans to intervene in the talks. ‘That, at the moment, is not something we’re discussing. This is between a private employer and a union and that’s where it should be.’

With the provincial NDP’s non-engagement, the CAW pushed back and reiterated the provincial government’s promises to provide well-paid work in a “brand new industry.” As reported in the *Windsor Star* (Cross 1995b):

The provincial government, which owns the casino and gets a significant cut of revenues and profits (rumoured at close to \$1 million a day), has maintained it is not involved in the negotiations. Ontario Casino Corporation spokesman Bill Gillies reiterated the government position again today, that the negotiations are between the union and the casino company. [...] The union has maintained from the start that this is a brand new industry that’s making big money, money which should be more equally shared with the employees. They harken back to NDP government promises when the casino was announced, that workers would be well paid. And they assert that the \$9.30 average wage isn’t fair compensation. [...] ‘The province is doing well, the corporation is doing well, the City of Windsor is doing well, developers and construction is doing well. Everyone seems to be doing well except the workers at the bottom of the totem pole,’ [Lewenza said].

The provincial NDP government remaining out of negotiations ran counter to the expectations of the CAW—which represents a large proportion of the Canadian labour movement—who have historically supported the NDP. Put simply, the CAW leadership expected the NDP to provide support to the CAW during negotiations and the NDP publicly stepped aside. For instance, the *Windsor Star* (Sumi 1995) reported that the union expected the province to push Windsor Casino Ltd. back to the bargaining table when the employer broke off talks, “The union had hoped the Crown corporation could intervene and get the two sides back to the table, but [Crown] corporation directors met Thursday and decided against any government influence in the dispute, Gillies [Ontario Casino Corporation spokesman] said.” CAW union leader, Ken Lewenza, and the Windsor NDP MPP, Dave Cooke, who were both influential in bringing the casino to Windsor, are also reported as offering conflicting views on the position the provincial government ought to take in negotiations and the strike in the *Windsor Star* (Cross 1995d):

‘They’re [the province] ignoring this whole unnecessary strike,’ Lewenza said. ‘They can say it’s the private sector, but this is the Ontario government. They can settle it with one phone call, but they won’t.’ On Monday, Windsor MPP Dave Cooke, a cabinet minister, reiterated what Premier Bob Rae said before: ‘It would serve no useful purpose for the government to intervene,’ Cooke said. ‘We’re not the employer.’ Although the CAW plans to ask its many Windsor-area members to write OCC [Ontario Casino Corporation] chairman Gil Bennett asking for some intervention, no change in the government’s position is expected.

The strike concluded with a ratified collective bargaining agreement—with 78 percent membership support—where workers would receive nearly a 25 percent wage increase over three years.<sup>90</sup> Upon ratification, Local 444’s leader expressed regret for creating too high expectations for the workforce. The *Windsor Star* (Cross 1995e) reported, “‘Our sights were set very, very high, their sights were set very, very low,’ recounts CAW Local 444 president Ken Lewenza. Looking back, Lewenza wishes he hadn’t made such a daring statement [re wages: sky’s the limit].”

With the first collective bargaining agreement, labour costs would rise 30-40 percent in the first year of the deal. As a result of the profit sharing agreement between the Las Vegas consortium—Windsor Casino Ltd.—and the provincial government, the provincial government would absorb 95 percent of this extra cost. Despite the provincial government incurring the majority of the increased labour cost, representatives of the provincial government maintained that they played no role in the talks. As stated in the *Windsor Star* (Cross 1995e):

Peter Block, special assistant to Economic, Development, and Trade Minister Frances Lankin, emphasized that Lankin played no role in the talks. ‘We were very, very interested observers,’ Block said. ‘Windsor Casino [was] in the best position to determine what costs can be affordable, to be competitive both with other potential casinos that may open in Detroit, and casinos that may open elsewhere.’ The casino had wanted to keep wages down to hospitality-industry levels, in order to be competitive with future casinos.

The NDP provincial government’s decision to remain out of the negotiations is nevertheless confusing given the ideological expectation that the NDP would intervene on the side of the union. The fact that the NDP tacitly intervened to lower the union’s expectations is what is theoretically unexpected. The NDP positioning themselves as taking a ‘hands-off’

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<sup>90</sup> The Collective Agreement (1995-1998) resulted in wage increases of 17 to 34 percent over three years. The average casino wage should go up about 25 percent, from \$9.23 an hour to about \$11.50 an hour, Canadian Auto Workers Local 444 officials estimated (Rennie 1995).

approach effectively amounted to intervening on the side of the employer, given the inherent power imbalance that exists between labour and capital. This also positions the provincial NDP government, the most ‘labour friendly’ of all, against other Canadian governments intervening to restrain employers (Logan 1956; McBride 1996; Pentland 1979). In fact, Tom, the former casino union leader who was instrumental in negotiating the first collective bargaining agreement, suggests that, instead of taking a hands-off approach, the provincial government was active in lowering the union’s wage demands. Tom states:

Our expectations were higher because there was an NDP government in power, and we thought the NDP would, behind the scenes, provide the support to break some of those barriers down. But they didn’t. I mean, they took the position, and 25 years later, I believe it was the right position. They took the position, ‘Listen we invested heavily in Windsor, Ontario. We created hundreds and hundreds of jobs. Now to expect in the first contract that you would move that needle where the CAW wanted it, it’s just not in the cards.’ So, we always thought that the New Democratic Party would eventually succumb to some of the pressure that we had at the bargaining table, but they didn’t. They weren’t as helpful as we thought they would be, and that’s also because our expectations were so high. [...] The government took the position to treat the workers fairly, ‘but remember, we introduced this for revenue for the province of Ontario and for diversity in Windsor relative to job creation. And in those areas we succeeded so let’s not blow our heads off basically. Don’t compare it to Chrysler, Ford, or GM, cause that’s not the league we are in.’ So that was the philosophical battle.

Tom also comments on the NDP’s role in managing the amount of “progress” the CAW and its casino membership achieved since this collective bargaining agreement could set a precedent for future Ontario casinos. He states:

But it was very very difficult because we had no contract like it in Canada. This was the model. And we knew, being a pilot program at Casino Windsor, that if Casino Windsor expanded, that our contract would apply to the new casinos. So, there was a lot of pressure on the province to make sure that *workers didn’t exhaust all of the success* that came out of the casino. The private consortium didn’t want to break some of the traditional work rules and wages that effect Vegas. Because at the table, all we ever heard was, ‘We don’t do this in Vegas.’ There was a lot of competing interest [...] we were building a union contract under a very successful company that brought the Vegas mentality to the bargaining table, and that was a conflict. (emphasis added)

Ultimately, the provincial government did not provide the support the CAW leadership expected. Instead, the provincial government, like the Las Vegas consortium, was concerned about labour costs and setting a precedent for other casinos. Indeed, the “philosophical debate”

of how much casino work was worth—and whether it would be classified as within the low-wage service sector or seen as a “brand new” category of work—was not simply waged between the employer and the union; the provincial government also took an active role in not allowing a share of surplus model to be brought into the casino.

After the ideological battle of the first collective bargaining agreement, union representatives’ framing of casino worker wages in the news media during subsequent rounds of collective bargaining changed. Along with the Local union leadership recanting the creation of ‘unrealistic’ expectations in the first round of collective bargaining, when examining the *Windsor Star*’s reports on the following six collective bargaining rounds (1998; 2001; 2004; 2008; 2011 and; 2014) the ideological debate of whether casino workers are entitled to auto-like wages or a proportion of their employer’s profits was absent.<sup>91</sup> Union leaders no longer publicly announced that casino workers ought to be paid like auto workers or deserved part of their employer’s profits. More generally, the amount of media coverage concerning union demands and employer offers in the news media were much lower in the following bargaining rounds.

Despite the casino being a public-private partnership between the provincial government and a Las Vegas consortium, the NDP Ontario government stepped aside during the first collective bargaining agreement. This move ran counter to the CAW leadership’s expectation that the labour-based NDP—who were pivotal in bringing the casino to the NDP stronghold of Windsor—would provide support to the CAW during negotiations. The NDP government adjusted the CAW’s expectations of bringing an “industrial mindset” to the “brand new” casino industry, ensuring the framing of wage entitlements would not be based on benchmarks outside of the market. With the CAW capitulating to these demands, the NDP and the CAW both worked against broader working-class interests of wage decommodification (Brenner 1995).

Ultimately, the NDP—who is seen as primarily aligned with the working-class and the Canadian labour movement—was pivotal in suppressing the CAW’s agenda of offering an alternative mode of framing wage entitlements in the service sector. Put plainly, the New

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<sup>91</sup> A review of the collective bargaining agreements from the following years—1994-1995 (unionization drive and first collective bargaining agreement); 1998; 2001; 2004; 2008; 2011 and; 2014—in the *Windsor Star* revealed the rhetoric of workers being entitled to a share of profits is largely absent in the collective bargaining years after the first collective bargaining agreement. For instance, in 1998, I find the idea of workers’ wages framed as deserving a “share of profits” or being “paid like automotive workers” is only mentioned four times. More importantly, these suggestions are not being made by union representatives, but casino workers. This suggests the discourse of union representatives concerning wage entitlements changed. In the following years, framing wage entitlements beyond the market is completely absent.

Democratic Party of Ontario did not provide this support and, in fact, was crucial in pushing the managerial interest in framing wages with reference to the low-wage service sector versus the decommodified wage entitlements of automotive manufacturing. The Ontario NDP did not support working-class interests (i.e., decommodifying wages) when in power (McBride 1996). Under pressure from the NDP, the CAW leadership reined in their rhetoric. Therefore, given the union's primary objective to limit market competition surrounding wages, the union leadership actually undermined the potential of building a consciousness around this cause in its casino membership; a worker consciousness which allows their organization to exist in the first place (Brenner 1985:37). Due to the NDP, and eventually the CAW, squashing the alternative wage framing discourse, the casino membership has now adopted a market-oriented vision of their wage entitlements. I now take up how the union's and casino membership's market-oriented discourse undermined membership's support for their union. First, however, I explain how the institutional setting of low union density within the service sector further constrained the union leadership's and casino membership's ability to frame wage entitlements outside the market.

#### *Institutional Constraints: Sectoral Union Density*

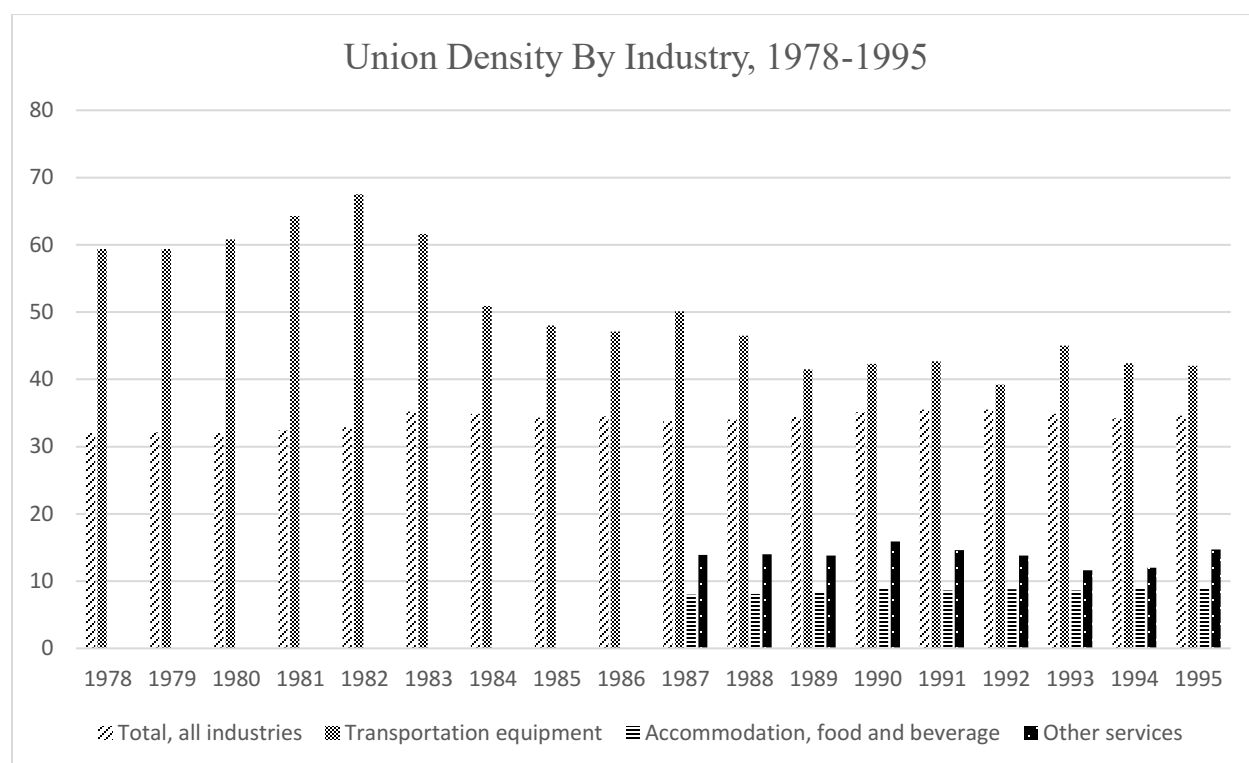
The CAW representatives took for granted the specific labour-managerial relations established in the post-war decades and the decommodified wage scales found in automotive assembly that were born out political struggle. Despite setbacks through the years, the CAW/Unifor has been able to retain high union density in automotive assembly. For instance, while falling from a high of 67.5 percent in 1982, from 1990 to 1995 union density in “Transportation equipment manufacturing” remained steady at approximately 42 percent (Figure 13). From 1997 to 2015, “Manufacturing” union density ranges from 23.5 to 33.3 percent (see Figure 14). More specifically, from 1997 to 2015, the unionization rate of “Motor vehicle assemblers, inspectors, and testers” was between 52.4 and 73.2 percent (see Figure 15). This has contributed to union representatives' and automotive workers' ability to establish alternate benchmarks for wage rates—such as company profits—since their wages have been largely taken out of competition.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, high union density and the CAW's legacy of

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<sup>92</sup> In recent years, the decommodification of wages in the automotive sector has slipped, particularly with the rise of two-tier wage scales and the erosion of defined benefit pension plans (Fowler 2012; Owsram 2016).

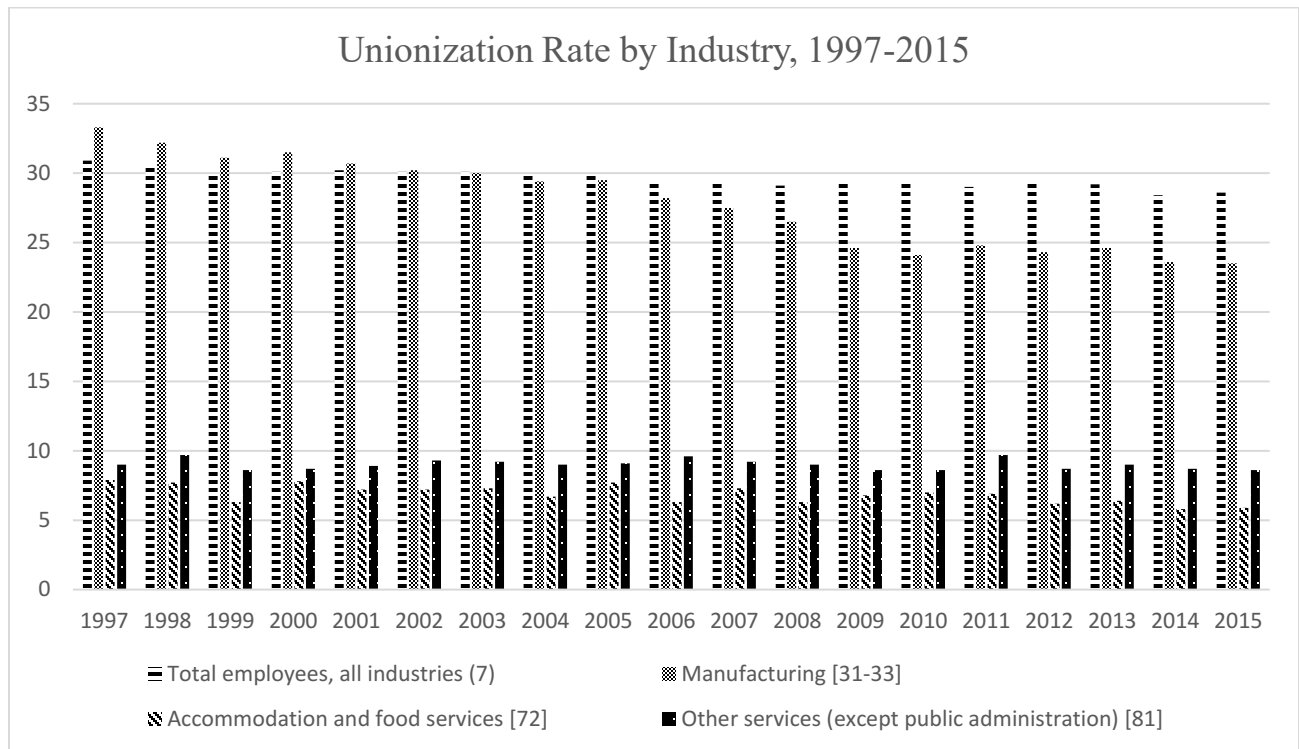
decommodifying automotive manufacturing wages reinforce automotive workers’ “industrial mindset,” which reflects a decommodified wage scale.

Figure 13: Union Density by Industry, 1978-1995



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 279-0026—Number of unionized workers, employees and union density, by sex and industry based on the Standard Industrial Classification, 1980 (SIC). Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act (CALURA) Catalogue 71-202. Calura, union membership as of December 31<sup>st</sup>. Labour Force Survey, December estimates. Union density is the proportion of unionized workers derived from Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act (CALURA) CANSIM table 2790026, component unionized workers, to the number of employees derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) CANSIM table 2790026, component employees.

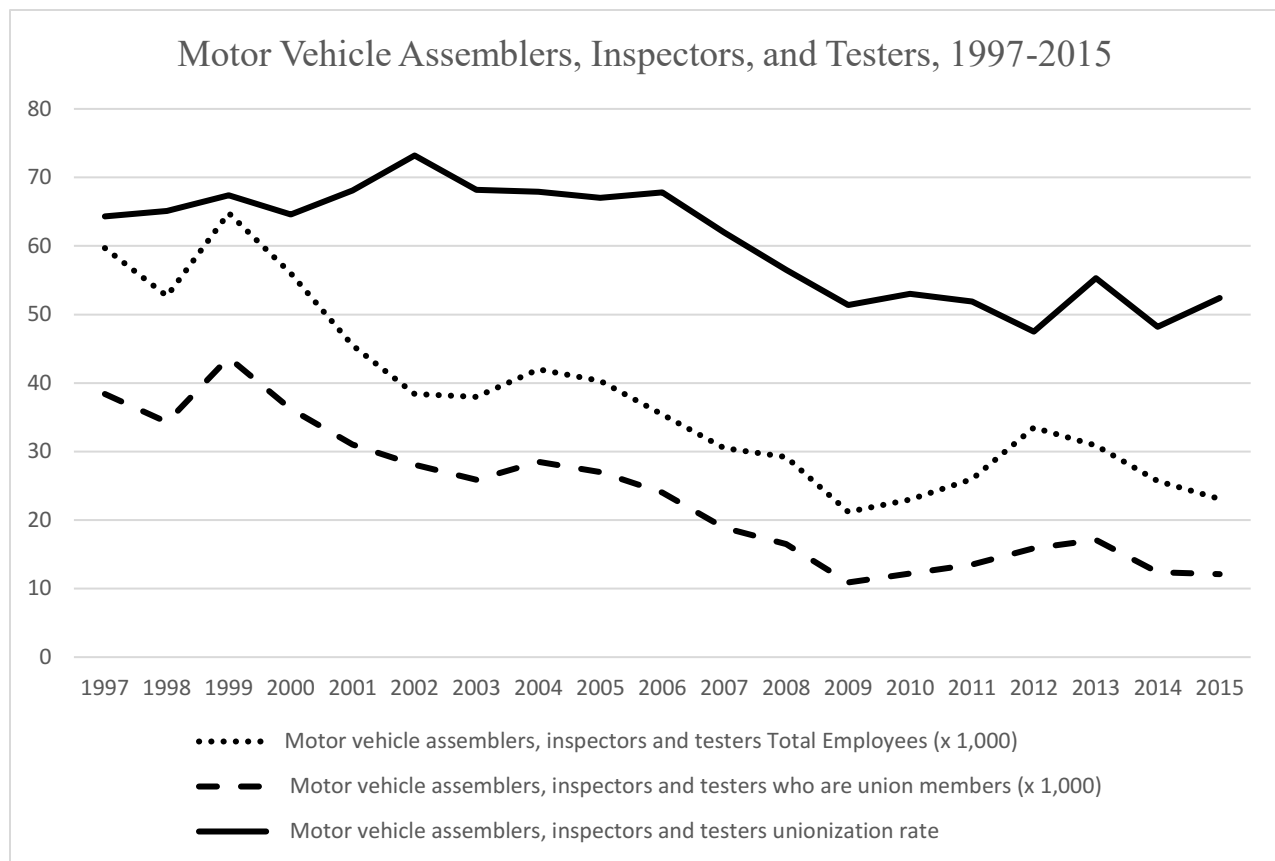
Figure 14: Unionization Rate by Industry, 1997-2015



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 282-0223—Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS), employees by union status, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

Unionization rate: Employees who are members of a union as a proportion of all employees.

Figure 15: Motor Vehicle Assemblers, Inspectors, and Testers, 1997-2015



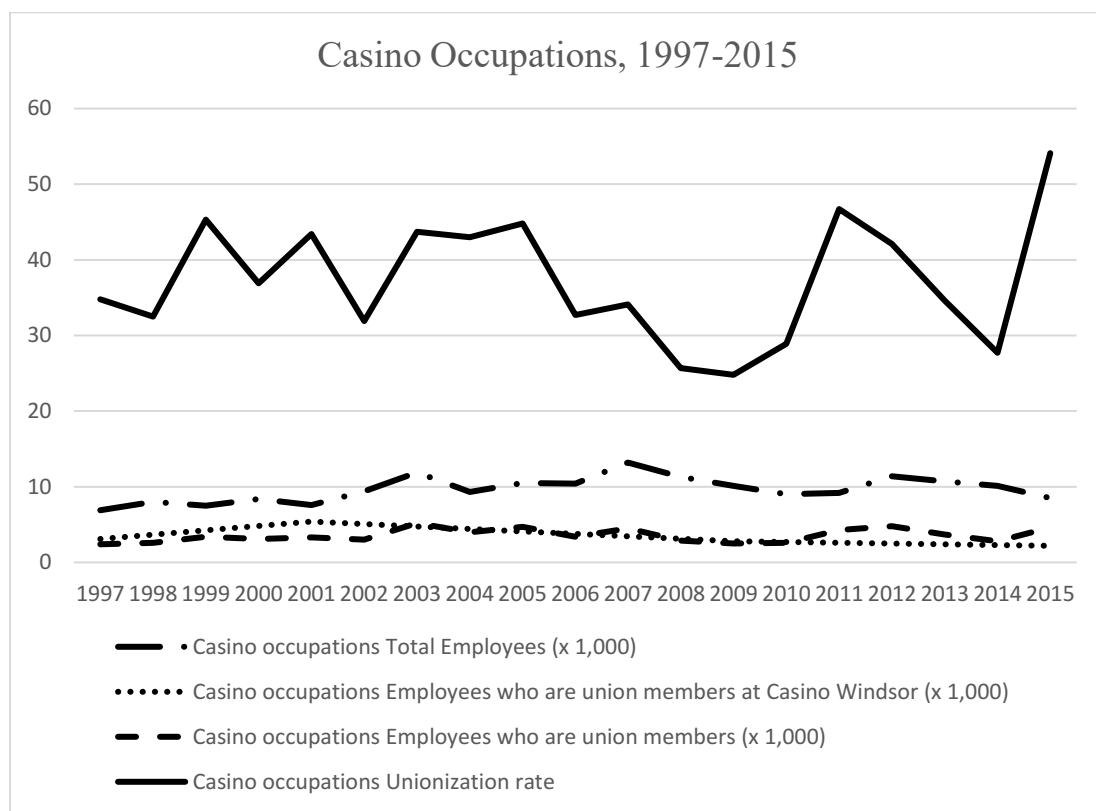
Source: Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulation

In contrast, Casino Windsor was entering a service sector that had much weaker union density. For instance, up until 1986, “Accommodation, food, and beverage” and “Other services (except public administration)” display zero union density, while from 1990 to 1995 union density ranges from 8.6 to 9.1 percent in “Accommodation, food, and beverage” and from 11.6 to 15.9 percent in “Other services (except public administration)” (see Figure 13). From 1997 to 2015, the unionization rate in “Accommodation and food services” ranges from 5.8 to 7.9 percent and “Other services (except public administration)” ranges from 8.6 to 9.7 percent (Figure 14). Looking at “Casino occupations” from 1997 to 2015, the unionization rate ranged from 24.8 to 54.1 percent (see Figure 16). This is relatively high, especially compared to the service industries captured in Figure 14. Nonetheless, when examining the total number of casino employees who are union members, the Casino Windsor unionized workforce comprises a significant proportion of the total count of unionized casino employees. Therefore, while the union density in this particular occupation—casino work—on aggregate is relatively high, union



density in “Casino occupations” is significantly comprised of unionized Casino Windsor employees (see Figure 16). In fact, the trend lines representing the number of casino employees who are unionized and number of casino employees unionized at Casino Windsor map onto one another quite closely. Moreover, assuming a discrepancy between estimates from Local 444 sources and Statistics Canada in defining what counts as a unionized “Casino Occupation/Employee,” in some years there are more reported unionized employees at Casino Windsor than the total number of unionized casino employees reported by Statistics Canada.

Figure 16: Casino Occupations, 1997-2015



Source: Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulation

Overall, in the 1990s, casinos were premised as a new industry in Ontario. Given this, a struggle emerged over how wages would be determined in this new industry. With NDP discipline, the CAW leadership retracted its initial rhetoric, adopting the idea that wages ought to be compared to other service and hospitality occupations. This was pivotal in embedding Casino Windsor workers’ frame of reference into the low union density service sector instead of

constructing a high-density ‘casino island.’ This contrasts with the CAW’s success in decommodifying auto manufacturing wages within manufacturing. Union leadership eventually encouraged the casino membership to compare themselves to other service and hospitality occupations. Consequently, the casino membership largely only had non-union and low-wage occupations with whom to compare their wages. Indeed, market forces played a much larger role in framing wage entitlements than automotive as a result of these political and institutional forces. An effect of this is casino workers associating casino jobs with the larger (non-union) service labour market, rather than seeing them as part of a group of higher-wage unionized jobs (including casinos and automotive manufacturing).

#### *Casino Membership: Demobilized and Unsupportive*

*We still find, as casino workers, that Chrysler’s voice in the Local dominates. There’s been talk over the years that we should form our own Local kind of thing. [...] To this day we still kind of sometimes feel that we don’t get, for the amount of dues we put in, sometimes we feel like we still get short shrift. – Mike, Casino Worker*

*We feel like we are the disliked younger sibling. You know, we feel like they don’t understand the whole concept of what we are doing, the union. I like the people in the union, but let’s face it we do not have a happy relationship with our union. I mean every time there is a strike, it feels like they have held something back from us or they have lied to us. About what we are going to get. What we are going to get out of all this. – Patty, Casino Worker*

Despite casino workers understanding their wages from a market-oriented model, they do remember the promises the CAW leadership made to the membership concerning auto worker wages. Like many service sector workplaces, the union confronts difficulty in mobilizing membership support due to its heterogeneous workforce, from multiple classifications with multiple wage rates (some tip-based) to ethnic and gender diversity<sup>93</sup> (Offe and Wiesensthal 1980). Given such heterogeneity, it may be less likely that the casino membership’s support for the CAW/Unifor would be as strong as in more homogenous sectors, characterized by limited job classifications and wage rates, like automotive assembly. The CAW’s inability to deliver “auto worker wages,” combined with its diversity challenges, exacerbated the difficulty in

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<sup>93</sup> The casino workforce is divided into approximately 90 classifications (Collective Agreement 2014-2018).

fostering the casino membership's support for and solidarity with its union. For instance, a casino worker suggests that the unfulfilled expectations have "tarnished" the CAW's reputation. As Devin states, "The Local took a lot of heat from the casino and the casino workers over the years. They kind of had their reputation tarnished a little bit through the years because of the casino, not getting the goals that everybody wants and the bad press and angry workers." A couple who both work at the casino, Kate and Ryan, discuss their perception that the Local 444 leadership does not "fight as hard" for the casino membership as they do for the automotive membership. They state:

K: Where you have Chrysler that have COLA [Cost of Living Allowance]. We never got that. So how do you go from one Local fighting for that with Chrysler but the same union not fighting for that with you for the casino.

R: And I think that's the reason why, like people see like, 'Oh we see what Chrysler has, we want that.' And now they are realizing, you are not going to get it.

Relatedly, Heather, a casino worker, comments on how the casino membership feels that the union has misled them:

They're a powerful Local and people thought that they were going to be their saviour, they would be their saving grace kind of thing. We'd be making Big Three wages. Cause they were so well known and they were quite powerful. But the general consensus from a lot of people, and like I said, I don't want to bite the hand that feeds me, they were misled by them.

Due to their adoption of a market-oriented framing of wage entitlements, casino workers are unable to mobilize around an alternative wage rate discourse. Somewhat paradoxically, however, casino workers feel betrayed by the CAW/Unifor for not achieving what they, in essence, do not see themselves as entitled to. Put plainly, casino workers see their wages as 'fair' in relation to their skillset and based on intra-sector wage comparisons, yet they continue to remember the CAW's unfulfilled auto wage promise. Indeed, while the casino workers, in the end, were not offered a way to conceptualize their wage entitlements beyond the market—becoming effectively demobilized—they still hold the CAW/Unifor accountable for not winning these gains. This has created internal tension. The neoclassical perspective which the CAW/Unifor leadership eventually adopted in the casino, due to being disciplined by the provincial NDP, has trickled down to the casino membership and has worked against the CAW/Unifor's own interest of having a mobilized and supportive membership. While the CAW/Unifor leadership initially offered an alternative framing of wages in the service sector, the

CAW/Unifor changed this rhetoric after the first collective bargaining agreement. This has had the long-term impact of reducing the casino membership's support for CAW/Unifor Local 444.

The union leadership altered its initial promises after the unionization drive and first collective bargaining agreement. Consequently, the casino membership now distrusts and questions the union leadership's ability to work in their interest. As a result of the union leadership creating the expectation of auto-like wages and a share of surplus mentality, the casino membership was initially enthusiastic when becoming CAW members. After the first collective bargaining agreement, however, the union leadership effectively retracted this discourse. Due to this leadership failure, the casino membership has updated their preferences regarding their union representation. Essentially, due to NDP discipline, the CAW leadership representing the casino membership has become ideologically unmotivated which has translated into a demobilized casino membership. More importantly, this has resulted in the casino membership becoming unsupportive of their own union (Ahlquist and Levi 2013).

### *Conclusion*

My findings complicate previous scholarship which suggests that casino workers represent the 'new economy' of service work, whereby workers simply embrace a market-oriented ideology through their entrepreneurship and individualism (Mutari and Figart 2015; Sallaz 2002; Taft 2016). Instead, I evince how the larger political and institutional forces created a power struggle that ensured Casino Windsor workers would leave the "industrial mindset" in the past and adopt a market-oriented understanding of their labour. Casino Windsor workers' understanding of wage entitlements based on a market-oriented model is not due to some inherent nature of service work.

Drawing on the counterfactual case of Las Vegas, which enjoys high union density in its resort casinos, I demonstrate that there is nothing inherent to casino workers, and service workers more broadly, framing their wages from a market-oriented perspective. Instead, Casino Windsor workers' neoclassical framing of wage entitlements is the result of being embedded in a political and institutional environment that did not nurture an alternative mode of framing wage entitlements. Unlike the automotive workers, who enjoy a legacy of high union density and a tradition of union education that provides a language to conceptualize the profits they produce

(Gindin 1995; Spencer 1994; Taylor 2001),<sup>94</sup> an unsupportive NDP provincial government and low sectoral union density squashed the CAW leadership's and casino membership's attempt to frame wages outside the cash nexus. In essence, as many casino workers see the millions of dollars passing through the casino, there is nothing inherent to casino workers' work which disallows a 'share of surplus' discourse. Nonetheless, the Casino Windsor membership embraces the idea that they simply produce an "experience"—instead of a product—and view their low human capital as reason enough to be "grateful" for their wage.

Empirically, automotive and casino workers respectively demonstrate decommodified and market-based understandings of wage entitlements. Strategically, the CAW leadership brought to the casino the same discourse of decommodified wages seen in automotive manufacturing. Yet, I find that there is a gap between how the union leadership initially attempted to frame wages and the current way casino workers discuss wage entitlements. Casino workers refer to their human capital (or lack thereof) and draw on intra-service sector comparisons as determining and justifying their wages. Despite the union's attempt to bring a share of surplus model of wage determination into the casino—a service workforce—the casino membership has not taken up this framework and perceives their wages from a neoclassical standpoint. This framework does, however, persist among automotive workers who continue to stress their entitlement to a proportion of the profits they create for the employer. Evidently, the CAW's attempt to transplant the "industrial mindset" into the casino was unsuccessful.

Why, then, did the CAW fail to bring a share of surplus model of wage determination into Casino Windsor? Politically, I find the (in)actions of the NDP provincial government (1990-1995) during the first round of collective bargaining at Casino Windsor was a central factor in the CAW's unsuccessful campaign to bring a share of surplus model of wage determination into the casino. The NDP squashed the CAW's discourse of a "brand new industry" and their attempt to create a 'casino island' (i.e., not comparing wage entitlements to other service work) based on decommodified wages. Instead, the CAW conceded that casino worker wages would be compared to the broader service sector. Casino work became part of the broader service sector,

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<sup>94</sup> Despite casino workers also having the ability to participate in the CAW/Unifor education programs, it seems that these education programs have not been successful in transferring the sophisticated economic analyses and alternate framing of wage rates displayed by automotive workers.

which has low union density and low-wages, constraining the CAW's ability to set alternative wage benchmarks.

Since casino workers were then told to compare their wages to the larger service sector, the low sectoral union density made it increasingly difficult for casino workers to see their wage entitlements beyond market forces. In essence, casino workers were told—by the NDP and eventually the CAW—to see themselves as doing similar work as individuals in the low-wage, non-union service sector. This contrasts to the CAW's success in creating a decommodified 'auto worker island' within the higher union density manufacturing sector. This resulted in auto worker wages being largely taken out of competition. Relatively high union density—resulting in less wage-based market competition—allowed union representatives to create alternate benchmarks for wage rates, such as company profits. Market forces ultimately played a much larger role in the framing of wage entitlements at the casino than in the automotive industry. A market-oriented perspective now dominates the casino membership's discourse. Casino workers associate casino jobs with the larger (non-union) service sector, rather than with high-wage unionized jobs (like automotive manufacturing).

In casino workers' contemporary accounts, they have adopted a market-oriented view of the wages they deserve. Instead of stressing workers' entitlement to a portion of the profits that *they* created, casino workers understand their wages by comparing them to those of (low-wage) service sector jobs, their skillset relative to supply and demand, and what they 'produce' (Livingstone and Scholtz 2016). Unlike their automotive brothers and sisters, casino workers adopt a market theory of wage determination. Ultimately, instead of wage determination being based on a share of employer's profits that was initially present when the casino opened, I find that casino workers parrot neoclassical theories of wage entitlements. Casino workers compare their wages to other low-wage service industries and view their wages as a function of the supply and demand of their skillsets. This results in the casino workforce expressing 'gratitude' for their employment.

Not only was the CAW's attempt to base casino wage entitlements on the surplus the casino generates unsuccessful, but the unfulfilled promises and expectations of auto-like wages has had a negative impact on the casino membership's support for their union. After the first collective bargaining agreement, the CAW leadership altered its initial rhetoric, resulting in a demobilized and unsupportive casino membership. The casino workers' neoclassical discourse

has demobilized their wage demands. This demobilization—as the CAW leadership retracted its initial ‘share of surplus’ discourse—has come at the cost of the CAW losing the trust and support of the casino membership. In addition to adopting a neoclassical wage entitlement framework, the casino membership questions the will and ability of the union to represent their interests. Despite the casino not fulfilling the expectation of auto worker wages, in the next chapter, I examine whether Casino Windsor fulfilled the promise of providing ‘good jobs’ based on the workforce experiences of casino workers.

## Chapter 5: Casino Windsor Jobs: From Opportunity to Immobility and Precarity

In postindustrial economies,<sup>95</sup> casinos are emblematic of a strategy to create low-skilled service jobs in economically depressed cities. States/provinces encourage communities to host casinos based on their ability to not only create jobs, but to provide ‘good jobs’ (Mutari and Figart 2015). In this chapter, I seek to understand whether and how Casino Windsor provided ‘good jobs’ over time based on its workers’ experiences. Previous research on the employment implications of casino development suggests that the compensation and conditions of casino employment may decline as the casino gaming environment becomes more competitive (Hunter 2010; Mutari and Figart 2015). Research also highlights, however, two caveats concerning the ability of casino workers to cope with work quality decline: 1) casino employment tends to attract those who treat casino work as temporary and/or supplementary work and 2) casino workers are free to seek employment at other casinos—with casinos a growing industry—and ‘chase tips’ if they are unhappy with their working conditions/remuneration (Sallaz 2002, 2009; Taft 2016).

I draw on 28 semi-structured interviews with Casino Windsor employees along with media from the *Windsor Star* (1994-2015) to examine whether casinos provide ‘good jobs.’ In keeping with the promise of ‘good jobs,’ I find Casino Windsor did initially offer workers with employment histories in the low-wage service sector the prospect of higher compensation and union representation. In interviews, workers shared how Casino Windsor provided the ability to pursue a higher standard of living. Workers also highlighted that employment at Casino Windsor was an opportunity particularly for women in the female-dominated service sector. Casino employment was an opportunity for both low-skilled women and men (60:40 female to male) coming from the service sector. For these workers, the tips along with wages, benefit packages, and union representation meant that employment at Casino Windsor represented upward economic mobility.

Their experience of economic mobility, however, was short-lived, spanning 1994 to 2000. The decline of Casino Windsor’s revenues coincided with Detroit establishing three

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<sup>95</sup> In industrialized economies, this is a period of growth where the relative importance of manufacturing declines and services, information technology, and research increases. These economies are characterized by: a declining manufacturing sector, resulting in deindustrialization; a large service sector; and an increase in the amount of information technology (Krahn, Hughes, and Lowe 2015).



casinos across the US-Canada border. As casino competition increased, remuneration and working conditions at Casino Windsor deteriorated. Tips declined and wages stagnated. Casino management also streamlined its labour costs by laying off workers, relying on a more flexible workforce, and outsourcing venue space to non-union corporations. In addition, workers also reported that management's disciplinary action against workers increased as revenues and visitation declined. In fact, during 2004 collective bargaining, Casino Windsor workers went on strike for "respect,"<sup>96</sup> which they felt they were losing in their interactions with management. Among their grievances were the increase in management's disciplinary action against them and management's insinuations to workers about their replaceability as well as workers' low likelihood of finding comparable compensation elsewhere. Despite these tactics, workers have not only chosen to remain at Casino Windsor but have also internalized the importance of providing quality customer service. Workers treat their provision of quality customer service as essential to keeping Casino Windsor competitive and open for business.

This chapter provides an alternate story of the employment implications of casino development when the casino workers themselves are not mobile. This immobility allows management to rule through disciplinary actions while still reaping the benefits of worker 'loyalty' and effort (i.e., very low turnover<sup>97</sup> and quality customer service). Windsor workers have little alternative other than to offer good service to keep their jobs. In theory, they are 'free' to go elsewhere, but, in fact, there is nowhere else to go. With Windsor on an international border and with a longstanding high unemployment rate, Casino Windsor has created a 'company town' where workers are captive and feel that their quality customer service keeps the casino competitive and open. I show that Casino Windsor has created and benefits from a captive labour force.<sup>98</sup> Three factors render the casino workforce captive: first, the Windsor area's record high unemployment rate relative to other Canadian cities, second, the absence of alternative employment offering comparable compensation in the region's low-skill service sector, and, third, Casino Windsor's placement on an international border where workers cannot access the employment opportunities created from increased regional competition. These factors have

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<sup>96</sup> Throughout the strike, casino workers insisted that the strike was about "respect" rather than simply wages.

<sup>97</sup> A Unifor informant indicated the turnover rate for Casino Windsor was eight percent in 2017.

<sup>98</sup> Captive labour forces are defined by their context, tending to exist in single industry and single employer towns where competition among employers is low or absent and the accessibility of workers to other sources of employment is limited (Wekerle and Rutherford 1989).

inhibited Casino Windsor workers' job mobility. By providing good service, I argue, workers reclaim their sense of worth, and mitigate their sense of precarity (Gibson and Papa 2000; Lucas 2011; Lucas and Buzzanell 2004). Workers say that they do not feel valued, respected, or appreciated by management but that they should be, in their view, because they are so 'good'—the 'best.'

First, I lay out the previous research on casino employment and how this case contributes to understanding whether and how casino workers experience casinos as generating 'good jobs.' I then detail how Casino Windsor was initially an economic opportunity for low-skilled workers in the service sector. Next, I turn to how workers now experience this initial economic opportunity as financial hardship because their employment has become increasingly precarious. I point principally to the immobility and captive status of Casino Windsor workers to explain why these casino workers do not leave or 'chase tips,' unlike previous findings on the employment implications of casinos. Finally, I show how workers cope with their immobility and management's negation of their worth by laying claim to the idea that they are responsible for the continued existence and success of Casino Windsor. Workers' reclamation of worth also embodies an oppositional stance towards management, as workers highlight management's lack of value.

### *Casino Development and Jobs*

Employment growth is the primary logic used to justify casino development. The promise of quality jobs for economically depressed areas also serves to drive casino development (National Gambling Impact Study Commission 1999). Indeed, many low and middle-income communities across North America have adopted casinos as an economic development strategy and as a job creator (Mutari and Figart 2015). As seen in Chapter 3, those who promoted Casino Windsor drove home the promise that casino Windsor would bring 'good jobs.'

Scholars, focusing on the economic impacts of casinos, debate whether casinos have a net effect on an area's unemployment and wages (Chhabra 2007; Cotti 2009; Garrett 2004; Monchuk 2007). Garrett (2004) finds employment growth in counties with a casino compared to counties with no casino. Monchuk (2007) also finds casinos to have a positive effect on employment while decreasing the unemployment rate. Cotti (2009) suggests that casino introduction increases aggregate employment and has positive wage effects in host counties

relative to counties without a casino. Some also argue that the employment and wage gains (if any) tend to be limited and may plateau or decrease over time. For instance, Hunter (2010) finds that casino employment effects—defined as employment growth—were only positive and significant for new casinos.<sup>99</sup>

Other scholars suggest that casinos are less economically helpful for host communities and are politically fraught developments (Beckert and Lutter 2012; Ryan 2012; Schüll 2012; Volberg and Wray 2007). Gerstein et al. (1999) find that casinos have no significant per-capita income effect. Using the case study of Chester, Pennsylvania, Mele (2011) argues that casino development isolates the city from other forms of investment. Mele (2011) also suggests that casino development represents one facet of states’/provinces’ and local governments’ aggressive attempt to attract private capital. Calvano and Andersson (2010) examine casino legalization in Philadelphia and the conflict created between the community versus the gaming industry, investors, and real estate interests. They argue that the Philadelphia case represents government and corporate elites extracting value from already low-income and/or downwardly mobile citizens. Effectively, this literature tends to critique casino development in suggesting that host communities and their citizens are hindered rather than helped by such developments (Chambers 2011; Klassen and Cosgrave 2009; Schüll 2012). However, with a focus on high-powered stakeholders and interest groups, workers—if addressed—are framed as a disenfranchised group amid larger struggles over resources (Bol, Lancee, and Steijn 2014; Calvano and Andersson 2010; Chambers 2011; Klassen and Cosgrave 2009). Despite arguments that casinos further devitalize—instead of revitalize—and exploit economically depressed areas, few studies actually speak with or study casino workers, a group that is to directly benefit from the casino, to understand how they experience this ‘revitalization’ effort.

As discussed above, there are two ways in which scholars engage the effects of casinos. First, a literature that considers how casino development affects employment and wage growth. This literature tends to suggest that workers benefit from casinos. Second, another literature suggests that casinos in fact beget more inequality for already economically vulnerable communities. The former tends to suggest that workers do benefit from casinos while the latter suggests casino development exploits host communities, including their workers. Existing

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<sup>99</sup> Hunter (2010) defines ‘new’ as within four years of opening.

research offers competing scenarios of what casinos mean for casino workers in host communities.

Research which specifically addresses who casinos employ and how workers experience the quality of employment is sparse. There are a few notable ethnographic studies working to fill this gap. Sallaz (2002, 2009), for instance, examines the labour process of blackjack dealing and how the presence of clients at the point of production in tandem with the tipping relationship affects managerial strategies for organizing and monitoring workers. Sallaz suggests that the tipping relationship in Las Vegas creates a semblance of agency and entrepreneurialism for dealers as they ‘hustle’ players for tips. Sallaz argues that this entrepreneurial game diffuses overt conflict between managers and workers. Dealers blame their low-wages on customers who tip poorly, while potential discontent over their lack of job security is mitigated by their frequent lateral movement across casinos (as workers “chase tips”). Sallaz’s focus remains quite narrow—attending principally to dealers and the tipping relationship.

Taft’s (2016) ethnography, *From Steel to Slots: Casino Capitalism in the Postindustrial City*, offers a squarely negative assessment of casinos and the employment they offer. Taft suggests that casino workers are complicit in their precarity because they embrace the postindustrial mantra of individualism and entrepreneurialism. Taft, like Sallaz, discusses how casino workers have a sense of mobility, as they can ‘chase tips’ and move to different casino employers in the region if dissatisfied. Similar to Sallaz, Taft focuses mainly on dealers while suggesting that casino employees do not have a sense of long-term commitment to their employer.

Mutari and Figart (2015) focus on changes in job quality in Atlantic City casinos. They find that job quality has deteriorated, attributable to the increasing saturation of the casino market and the short-term demands of shareholders increasingly dictating workplace conditions. Cost-cutting measures have displaced the goal of creating ‘good jobs.’ While moving to more flexible employment relations, some casino workers are making “casino work a temporary means of furthering their education so that they could enter other fields where they felt they could contribute to society” (Mutari and Figart 2015: 21). Workers also use their mobility to work at other casinos in the area to cope with declining conditions, loss of hours, or job loss. Furthermore, they find the precarity casino workers’ experience is generational, where younger

workers are employed in part-time work. In contrast, the older workforce occupied the full-time positions yet experienced struggles over stagnating wages and reduced benefits.

The research discussed above suggests mixed findings concerning whether casinos provide ‘good’ or ‘bad’ jobs while having a limited focus on how this can shift over time. As a highly unionized industry, casino employment tends to offer remuneration higher than what is found in other service and hospitality occupations (Mutari and Figart 2015; Waddoups 2002). Yet, how workers experience and cope with the potential changes to employment quality when experiencing mobility constraints in an increasingly competitive gaming market remains underexplored. The ethnographic research suggests that casino workers generally do not have a sense of long-term commitment to a single employer and/or can and will seek alternative employment in the casino industry when experiencing unsatisfactory workplace conditions. These findings, however, are based on geographic areas that house multiple casinos where workers can move to different casino operators to find more desirable employment. How do casino workers cope with declining job quality, however, when a single operator is hiring in a monopolistic labour market, such as Casino Windsor?

*Windsor’s ‘Windfall’ (1994-2000): The Casino and its Promise of ‘Good Jobs’*

Casino employment offered an economic opportunity for the workforce in Windsor. Casino Windsor workers were previously employed in the low-wage service sector. In contrast to the expectation that the casino would absorb NAFTA displaced automotive workers, the majority of those who took up casino jobs came from service sector. As evidenced below, the casino did not represent downward economic mobility—which would have been the case for the displaced auto worker—but rather upward economic mobility for those already in the service sector.

Casino Windsor was the only casino in the region from 1994 until the late 1990s. With a market monopoly, casino workers, such as Isabelle, nostalgically remember “being the only game in town” and echo Catherine’s, another casino worker’s, contention that patrons were “literally lined all the way around the building to come in.” The casino’s initial success resulted in an increase in income for its workers, as a combination of base wages and tips. Linking their remuneration to the casino’s success, workers frequently point out, like Catherine, that Casino Windsor was once the “highest grossing casino per square foot in the world” and, like Anne, that “we were making money hand over fist.”

With employment histories in low-wage service employment, casino workers report the base wage alone was an “opportunity.” Many casino workers affirmed that, when taking up employment at the casino in the early and late 1990s, they experienced a \$3-4 increase in their hourly wage. The average hourly wage at the casino in 1994 was \$9.32.<sup>100</sup> After the first collective bargaining agreement in 1995, the average wage rose to \$11.67 an hour by 1998. After the second collective bargaining agreement in 1998, the average wage rose to \$13.59 in 2001. In contrast, the Ontario provincial minimum wage was \$6.85 during this period (until 2004). Karl discusses the relative increase in compensation when first coming to the casino, saying “I was like ‘\$13 an hour!? Oh my God!’ There were checks like I’ve never seen before.” In fact, many workers see the casino as the only place besides the automotive industry to make a decent wage as a low-skilled worker in the area. Equaling, as Sara put it, a “step up” in remuneration, the casino did in fact provide upward economic mobility for the service workers in Windsor.

The casino’s initial success—as Denise says, “it was just going gangbusters at the time” (i.e., 1994-2000, prior to Detroit casinos)—resulted in lucrative tips (or what workers call “tokes”). For instance, Sandra states:

I [said] am going to do this for five years and I am going to get a grown-up job, do whatever I am going to do. Right, that never worked out because the money was too good. At that time, it was \$30 an hour, I mean with tips it was amazing. I couldn’t get out of it. It was like quicksand.

When tips were accounted for, and after the CAW negotiated the first collective bargaining agreement in 1995, Casino Windsor employment was considered among the most lucrative in the city. For instance, the *Windsor Star* reported in 1996 that Casino Windsor dealers earned an annual income anywhere from \$50,000-60,000, which was “believed to be the highest in the North American [casino] industry” (Vander Doelen 1996). Rick states, “the dealers were making a ridiculous amount of money. It was like \$35 an hour just in tips.” Mike also claims, “Of course the money was just ridiculous back then and all the customers. I was probably making a \$100 a day cash in tips. So, you just stay here.” The *Windsor Star* (Henderson 1998) also rhetorically queried:

What’s the most coveted job in Windsor? Research scientist? Corporate CEO? Brain surgeon? Try none of the above. Not to sneeze at any of these prestigious career choices, but the job that folks around this city would kill for right now is the bellhop position at Casino Windsor’s four-star hotel that’s opening next month. Would you believe up to

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<sup>100</sup> In 1994, casino wages ranged from \$7-\$12 an hour (Cross 1994e).

\$60,000 annually, most of it in tips, for sweet-talking the big players and delivering luggage to their complimentary rooms?

Some workers recollect others viewing them with envy. For instance, Patty shares, “So if you worked at the casino 20 years ago and you walked out with your clear purse [worn to prevent worker theft] into a store, people would actually stop you and be like ‘You’re so lucky.’ So, you felt like, ‘Oh wow, I hit the jackpot here.’” The lucrative income at the casino far surpassed what could be made in the outside world of service work.

The casino also offered union representation. All but one worker I interviewed were previously employed in non-union workplaces. Heather discusses the advantage of being unionized in the service sector:

Like go sit and talk to people in the coffee shops and in McDonalds and you ask them what their bosses are like and what other people who don’t work in a unionized environment, where things are regulated, there are rules people have to follow. Like if I am being harassed by a coworker, there is a way I can go about having that stopped or having it addressed at least.

Jessica states:

See when I worked at [previous employer] there was a unionized environment. I wasn’t in it. They were the technicians. So, they were all unionized but us in our department were not. So, somebody had to be let go and I made it through downsizing. I was fortunate that they kept me but then they got rid of somebody who had ten years plus on me and that doesn’t happen here, right? Here, at least I know my seniority counts for something.

Workers also enjoy health benefit packages due to their union membership, which are rare in other low-skill service jobs. For instance, for full-time casino workers, benefits include: life insurance of \$60,000, a prescription drug plan, semi-private hospital coverage, medical and health practitioners coverage, and vision, dental, and orthodontics coverage (Collective Agreement 2014-2018).

### *Opportunity for Women (and Men)*

While both male and female workers were pulled into the casino, the broader low-wage service sector tends to be female dominated (Armstrong and Armstrong 2010). Windsor stakeholders, casino workers, and auto workers see the casino as offering economic opportunity, especially for women. In 1994, the other large industry in the city offering a high wage was

automotive manufacturing. This workforce, however, was estimated to be about 95 percent male, and, in 2015 at the Chrysler Assembly plant, women fell within the 26 percent considered to be a ‘visible minority.’ In contrast, in 2015, the casino was made up of 61 percent women—comprising 1,351 of the 2,224 unionized workers (Unifor 2015).<sup>101</sup> This is somewhat comparable to my study sample where 35 of the 43 auto worker participants (81 percent) were men whereas 17 of the 28 casino worker participants (61 percent) were women.

Many casino workers recognize the gendered composition of the casino’s workforce and the favourability of such work for women. As Heather states, “For what is traditional female employment, we are the highest paid.” She goes on to add:

As a workplace, it has probably benefitted a lot of women because we are predominately a woman workforce. Like a guestroom attendant will make a lot more money there [casino] than they would at the Holiday Inn or at some of the independents. [...] Like I said, look at what cashiers are making anywhere else or even as a bank teller, because a lot of casino cashiers that work in the cage came from the banking industry. And they are making way more money than they ever would at a bank.

Karen states that women in the city have progressed economically because of casino employment, allowing them to be more “independent.” Patty also echoes this sentiment:

It gave women a decent paying job. If you weren’t educated to go into nursing, or you weren’t lucky enough to get into Ford or Chrysler [...] you could walk into this place with a high school graduation and make \$15, \$16, \$17 an hour. Or you could go to Walmart and make \$9. So, it gave a huge option for women. [...] If anything, it gave us money of our own, a decent wage, and benefits.

Diane also stresses how the casino provided an opportunity for women:

I would think we are majority women, so I believe that it has provided an opportunity for women in the city. Because there are jobs, whether they are more societally acceptable for women to dominate, we have a lot of classifications where it is very minimal men. So, they’ve hired more women over the years than they do men.

Casino workers also emphasize that the casino offered single mothers the ability to provide for their dependents. As Devin states:

I think it’s decent if you look at other F and B [food and beverage] [...] the wages are pretty good, number one, and you have your tips on top of that but you have benefits you know, so if you have a family, if you are the single mother raising kids on a server’s wage, you would rather work here than somewhere else.

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<sup>101</sup> Casino Windsor and Chrysler Assembly Plant employment numbers provided by a Unifor Informant. Received during 2014-2015 fieldwork.



Karen also discusses how casino employment is an opportunity for single mothers, saying “I know a lot of single mothers. The casino has helped them to be able to raise their kids and make sure they have benefits.” Another casino worker, Samantha, who is a single mother, states:

Some women that possibly wouldn’t have been making or getting the benefits, I mean myself included [...] because honestly a single mother raising her child, your...especially without postsecondary or anything like that, you are not really in a position for a \$20 an hour job, with benefits, you know. The casino did give that to me. The guys I guess, 20 years ago had more opportunity to make that kind of money with auto, they don’t now... but they did.

As Samantha alludes, while the automotive sector functioned to provide good wages largely for men, in contrast, the casino has functioned to provide relatively higher wages for a majority of low-skilled female service workers. Like Patty, Samantha also signals how the casino represents an opportunity for those with limited human capital (i.e., not having a postsecondary education) to garner higher compensation compared to other service work.

Relatedly, in a February 2001 pay equity agreement between the employer and the union, tips were estimated and factored into the salaries across job classifications.<sup>102</sup> The higher the tip estimates, the lower the base wage. In February 2004, however, a group of female Casino Windsor workers made a pay equity request to re-evaluate female dominated job classes. They contended that that tips were overestimated in some female dominated job classes, particularly casino cashiers, concierge attendants, and resort cashiers. The review officer concurred; Casino Windsor would have to pay these classifications a higher base wage. Casino Windsor was subsequently required to pay mostly female casino cashiers, concierge attendants, and resort cashiers wages comparable to those of primarily male security guards, liquor room attendants, and store clerks. Base pay increased as much as 41 percent and yielded back pay as far as September 1994 (Patrick 2004).<sup>103</sup>

The casino also offered an opportunity to men in Windsor who were “stuck” in low-wage jobs in the service sector prior to their casino employment. In my sample, the male workers

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<sup>102</sup> By 2001, there were six other casinos in Ontario. The 1990 Ontario Pay Equity Act compels all private companies with 10 or more employees to devise a plan that ensures women receive equal pay for work of equal value (Patrick 2004).

<sup>103</sup> Maintenance of pay equity is performed by a pay equity committee comprising two representatives from the union and two from the employer who assess new positions and changes to existing positions based upon the Job Evaluation Plan (Collective Agreement 2014-2018).

typically came from low-wage and non-union employment in bartending and bouncing, contract security, grocery stores, and restaurants. Casino workers, however, did not explicitly discuss how the casino offered an opportunity for low-skilled men coming from the service sector.

Regardless, given the employment histories of the male casino workers, casino employment was undoubtedly an opportunity for these men. While the casino did function as an opportunity for low-skilled workers in the service sector, rewards and working conditions began to decline once Detroit opened three casinos in 1999-2000.

### *From Fast Money to Hard Times*

With declining revenues beginning in the early 2000s, casino workers' prosperity also declined. Despite offering a comparatively better wage than other service workplaces in the area, workers discuss how financially they or their co-workers now experience financial hardship. In an industry where many workers depend on tips for a good livelihood, shrinking demand (i.e., visitation) has a direct and profound impact on earnings (Mutrai and Figart 2015). As Mike contends, tips are "not as good as they were back in the heyday" and are "inconsistent" as "some days they come and some days they don't." Casino workers feel, as Hank discusses, that they have gone "backwards" and, as Diane comments, we are "realistically facing financial hardship."

During the initial years of prosperity (1994-2000), many casino workers took on the debts of a middle-class lifestyle. As Betty notes, "I think everybody, as you make more money you spend more money. So, back when I was an assistant manager [of a small store], I made \$10-11 an hour, we were fine. And then [starting work at the casino] you make more money, you spend more money. The mortgage gets higher, cars get nicer, more toys." Sara also reflects on the rise and fall of the casino workforce's income related to a rising standard of living, stating:

But when we were making tons of money, we were throwing money around left, right, and center. We went on trips, buying bigger houses. I find the people are a lot more cautious now, like when things are good you never think things are going to get bad, and when they are bad, they are bad.

Workers contend that they or their colleagues are living paycheck to paycheck, as Jim says, are "on the lower end of average," and, as Matt states, "are just above poverty level." While Casino Windsor existed in a monopolistic gaming market, the Casino Windsor workforce—especially those whose wages were tip based—experienced a dramatic increase in income. This income resulted in workers reporting increased spending, including taking on higher mortgages and

long-term debts. However, as revenues and visitation have declined so too have the incomes of the workforce. Base wages have stagnated and tips have declined. Moving from ‘boom’ to ‘bust’ (along with more of the workforce being pushed to part-time work as detailed below), these workers now financially struggle to make good on the debts of a middle-class lifestyle they adopted.<sup>104</sup>

Beyond tips, casino workers’ wage growth has also declined and, at times, wholly stagnated over the years. For instance, in the 1995-1998 collective bargaining agreement, there were wage gains of 17 to 34 percent over three years with the average wage increasing by 25 percent (Rennie 1995). In the 1998-2001 collective bargaining agreement, there were wage gains of 16.5 percent over three years (75 cents in the first year and 50 cents per hour for the two following years). From 2001-2004, there were wage gains of eight to 13 percent over three years. In 2004, wages rose \$1.70 over four years (approximately a 42 cent increase, yearly), representing an increase of approximately 11.5 percent over four years. From 2008-2011, there was a two-year wage freeze and a raise of 30 cents per hour in the final year, amounting to approximately a 1.8 percent increase. In the 2011-2014 collective bargaining agreement, there was a wage freeze in 2011, then a 25 cent increase per year in the second and third years, equaling approximately 2.9 percent. Finally, in 2014, a four-year deal was signed where workers would have a wage freeze in year one and four, and 25 cents and 35 cents per hour raises in 2015 and 2017, respectively. This equals an approximate 3.5 percent wage increase over four years. As shown above, wage gains have consistently declined since the first collective bargaining agreement. In interviews, workers discuss the decreasing wage growth along with the rising cost of living. For instance, Matt states:

That’s what I think our biggest problem is: We don’t keep up with the cost of inflation. It’s not like when you are at Chrysler or one of the plants where you got the cost of living, we don’t have that, we don’t have that COLA [Cost of Living Allowance]. And gas prices and everything else goes up but our wages don’t, for the most part.

Patty, who makes approximately \$37,000 annually, discusses her wage and the cost of living:

I used to think it [the wage] was great, I used to obviously think it was spectacular pay, but we really haven’t had much of a raise in a very long time. I mean I just got a quarter

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<sup>104</sup> These debts further discipline workers (Dudley 2000; Marazzi 2011; Vaccaro 2014; Vaccaro, Hirsch, and Sabaté *unpublished manuscript*).

[*laughs*]. Ya we got a quarter [in the last collective agreement] but the hydro still goes up and the rent, so to me it is not keeping up with that.

Hank, who makes approximately \$38,000 annually, also states, “My pay? I feel that it’s ... it’s moderate. I think it could be better, yep. [...] ya it’s [wage increases] kept on hold and hold and hold. So, I feel that we are going backwards.” Chris, who makes approximately \$29,000 annually, before tips, also remarks:

Now it is, we are coming to a point where every contract it’s harder and harder to squeeze money out to get raises. You’re only getting 25 cent raises whereas before we used to get a 50 cent raise or whatever. The minimum wage is increasing and we are not increasing like the minimum wage. Now we are comparing, ‘Hey I am only making \$4 more than minimum wage.’

Initially, employment at Casino Windsor provided economic opportunity and mobility for its workforce which was drawn from low-wage service and hospitality employment. This is no longer the case, however. Casino workers are not only experiencing financial difficulty due to declining tip rates and stagnating wages. Of further complication are the casino’s strategies to cut labour costs—with 85 to 90 percent of its costs labour based—through, layoffs, Kaizen,<sup>105</sup> part-time and casual employment, and outsourcing (Vander Doelen 2008).

#### *Cutting Labour Costs: Layoffs, Kaizen, Part-Time and Casual Work, and Outsourcing*

*Labour is the biggest cost for the casino, right. I mean that is all that they have really. [...] The first place they go to make cost savings is always with the employees. I have watched it and we have seen it over the years. They shave off the employees, shave off the employees, shave off the employees. Now we’re down to what is it, 2,300 and change [employees] whereas 10 years ago we had maybe a thousand more – Ryan, Casino Worker*

Mirroring declining revenues, permanent layoffs at the casino began in 2001. While the workforce grew from 1994 until 2001 there has been a steady decline since then, with the loss of approximately 3,200 unionized workers by 2015, moving from 5,400 in 2001 to 2,224 unionized employees in 2015 (Unifor 2015). Reflecting on the ‘boom’ years, casino workers, like Chris, state, “We were working full-time and things were great,” and Denise, who remembers, “We were a huge workforce.” Through the years, workers report increasing employment insecurity,

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<sup>105</sup> Kaizen refers to the team based ‘continuous improvement’ work process model spearheaded by Toyota. It aims to eliminate waste by removing work process inefficiencies. Some argue that the outcome of Kaizen is synonymous with lean manufacturing in the sense that it reduces the number of workers needed to perform tasks.

which Karl characterizes as “like a noose tightening.” The minimal difference in years of tenure/seniority between workers—due to few new hires over the last 15 years—along with continued downsizing results in the casino workforce reporting job insecurity and expressing an omnipresent sense of the threat of job loss. Despite her seniority, Sandra, who began working for Casino Windsor in 1995, says, “You are never secure in your job, even with 20 years my job is not secure.” Indeed, workers commonly report, like Patty, who has worked at Casino Windsor since 1995, that “there is no security there” and like Isabelle, who has worked at Casino Windsor since 1998, “I feel insecure in my work. They are always looking for a reason to keep downsizing.” Patty also comments:

I don’t think the morale there is very good. The morale is sometimes very hard to put up with. There is very unhappy people there. There is a lot of emotion. There is a lot of people crying a lot. It is not a happy place, but I think that has more to do with always being afraid of layoffs. Always being afraid your job is going to go.

Another casino worker, Denise, reflects on the growing employment insecurity of the casino workforce, saying, “Through the years, you are riding a nice little line there and then the bottom starts falling out, there are layoffs and layoffs and a lot of people taking huge hits, money wise. There is a lot of that.” Reflecting on the impact of job loss from the casino, Sara says it is “Devastating and quick. Because if you are living paycheck to paycheck, within seven days, you know, it’s a huge impact. It would be a quick impact. Not like if you were at the Big Three.”

Some workers describe job loss from the casino as resulting in some losing their cars, homes, and families. Workers also describe that for some casino workers experiencing job loss there is a shift from worker to consumer, taking what little money they do have and gambling it away. For instance, Denise states:

After being laid off they [casino workers] come back, gambling whatever they had left away. And live in their cars and come back. I’ve seen slot attendants make a buzillion in tips you know and when they decimated their numbers, lose their houses and stuff like that. Because they just lived over their means. [...] They thought that the bottom would never fall out, they thought that this was going to go on forever and ever.

Jill offers a personal example of layoff, where she had to find employment working at a fast-food restaurant where her child happens to be a manager. Jill has left this restaurant, however, as the casino has recalled her, though only part-time. Jill thought about keeping both jobs but she was unable to coordinate the scheduling demands of the two employers. Jill, nonetheless, remains

afraid of being laid off again and having to return to this fast-food restaurant. She is not alone in this; several casino workers reported using jobs in the fast-food industry as a stopgap during periods of layoff.

Casino workers also discuss the employer's use of the industrial model of "Kaizen" to reduce the labour force. Workers see the employer striving for a smaller workforce to do "more with less" by "finding efficiencies" in labour processes. Throughout the interviews, workers comment on management using Kaizen to cut costs (i.e., layoff workers) and increase work intensity. Karl, who calls Kaizen "Japanese for layoff," describes the process of Kaizen in relation to layoffs and work intensity at the casino:

I could give you examples all over the casino of how staffing levels have shrunk over the years. It's utter insanity. In spots, where there was once four employees doing a job, there is one now. Doing the same job, for the same money. Skeleton crew all over the place. They Kaizen everything [*laughs*]. The Japanese word for layoff. [*laughs*] Continuous improvement it translates to. About four years ago, they started grabbing people off the floor, one or two general labour workers from the department, and a supervisor and a manager, and they were going around trying to find more efficient, time efficient, money efficient, ways to do the same job. And every time that they did one, it seems like there was a layoff. So, if they went and did a study in say housekeeping, three to four months later there was a little trim.

Rick comments on how finding labour efficiencies, which results in layoffs and lower staffing levels, results in work intensity increasing, "You know at the same time they expect you to do more and more and more and more to pick up the slack or the gaps as they Kaizen everything."

### *Part-Time Work*

Management also seeks to reduce labour costs by shifting to more part-time and casual employment. With the shift to more flexible labour, the union has attempted to regulate the number of workers who are considered part-time through the Collective Agreement 2004-2008, stating that only 33 percent of each department can be classified as part-time. The definition of part-time casino employment is employees who are regularly scheduled to work less than 30 hours per week. However, part-time employees can be scheduled more than 30 hours per week without being considered full-time for a period not to exceed 45 calendar days (Collective Agreement 2014-2018).

During ‘boom’ times, Casino Windsor used part-time casino work conservatively. For instance, while the 2004 collective bargaining agreement mandated that part-time workers comprise a maximum of 33 percent of the workforce, the part-time workforce only approximated 20 percent in 2005 (Pearson 2005). Part-time workers also reflected the prosperity of the full-time workforce, where full-time workers would forgo peak tip shifts (i.e., the weekend). Put simply, full-time workers’ tips were so lucrative during this period that many felt they could take peak tip shifts off work. Well-paid full-time workers saw part-time workers as a means to get social time off (i.e., part-time workers worked weekends and other socially undesirable shifts). When the casino was making more profit, part-time workers more or less functioned to allow employee flexibility for full-time employees to have standard work hours.

Part-time workers were also used as a tool to improve relations between management and employees. As a casino spokesperson was quoted in the *Windsor Star* (Mandal 2002):

In a move to improve relations between the casino and its employees, [Jim] Mundy said an agreement between management and the union will give workers an opportunity to have ‘normal’ weekends off. ‘Under a separate agreement, we’re hiring people on a part-time basis to work weekends.’

An editorial piece in 2001 in the *Windsor Star* (Vander Doelen 2001) connected the lucrative incomes of full-time workers to the presence of part-time workers:

[Casino workers] make so much money, they don’t have to work full-time. So, they take days off without pay – an estimated 34,000 days last year. Some work four, three or even two shifts per week, yet still enjoy full benefits. Talk about made in the shade. But this forces the company to hire hundreds of part-timers to fill shifts the fat full-timers decline to work. And the full-timers avoid weekends, the peak shifts of the casino industry. The part-timers, meanwhile, also require benefits and complain constantly about not making enough to live on.

Beginning in 2005, however, Casino Windsor began to increase its use of part-time status, laying off full-time workers and rehiring them as part-time workers. As reported in the *Windsor Star* (Pearson 2005), “Difficult times are why Casino Windsor says it is ‘rebalancing the workforce,’ which means cutting jobs while turning some full-time positions into part-time ones.” Holly Ward, Casino Windsor’s then Director of Communications and Community Affairs, went on to say to the *Windsor Star* (Pearson 2005), “‘The majority of those affected will be going from full-time positions to part-time positions. That is to reflect the changing business volumes and of course having part-time employees gives you more flexibility.’”

While initially providing ‘employee flexibility,’ part-time work now enables ‘employer flexibility,’ signaling a shift in the utilization of part-time workers. Part-time workers provide employer flexibility to adjust to high and low demand. Casino workers now viewed part-time workers as enabling the employer to run a ‘skeleton crew,’ facilitating the bare minimum of casino staff necessary. Unlike previously, where part-time workers were scheduled for the less desirable hours, full-time workers are now scheduled for the non-standard hours (i.e., weekends) while part-time workers are scheduled for the more standard work hours (i.e., weekdays), allowing the employer to adjust to low patron volumes.

Part-time status also allows the casino to avoid paying full-time benefits. While the company does provide an optional benefit plan whereby workers can opt in and pay 50 cents per hour worked in lieu, this coverage is limited to life insurance of \$27,000 and prescription drug coverage. Part-time workers do not receive the extended coverage given to full-time employees, which includes short-term and long-term disability insurance, physiotherapy, chiropractic services, massage, dental care, and additional life insurance.

Casino workers report either they or their colleagues are being pushed to part-time. Many workers discuss the instability and reduction in hours that accompany part-time work, where one may not get called in at all. The change in hours and benefits creates financial insecurity and as Lucy, who has been pushed to part-time, notes, “Part-time is not going to help raise a family.” Overall, workers report that hours have declined in recent years due to lower staffing levels and decreased visitation. For instance, Jessica reports how part-time hours are being reduced, saying, “We’ve seen a change in the last year [in part-time], [...] where the part-timers are getting two days a week, the ones that you used to see working five days a week. They scaled way back.” For these workers, the potential of being moved to part-time is always looming.

In order to survive financially, some workers report that they or their colleagues are seeking second jobs. Laurie discusses the stress of being pushed to part-time and taking on a second job:

I came back after maternity leave and I have been full-time for probably five years and I had just took out a lease on a vehicle. In a week back from my maternity leave, I was laid off and forced to part-time. So, when I came back with my son, we were trying to get pregnant not knowing that I was going to be pushed to part-time. I knew my intention was to have another baby, so I went out immediately and got a second job. So, I went to a bank, and I had a friend help me out. I worked part-time here three days a week and I worked three days a week at a bank. In order to supplement my income during that time



in order and allow us to have that other baby. I had both jobs. I was making 40 hours between the two jobs but during my pregnancy I was working midnights here. Usually Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday and then I would come home Monday morning at 8 am. I would go to sleep for two hours, get up at 10 am go to the bank for noon. [...] And a couple of times I would leave here at eight and go right to the bank. That was really hard and I did that for my entire pregnancy. It was terrible.

Rick discusses taking on a second job through a temporary employment agency when he was pushed to part-time as he was unable to pay the bills:

There was a period of time where we weren't getting a lot of shifts so I actually did some temp work. So, I have done a variety of jobs. Yeah like just working everywhere. I took jobs like in a stamping facility. I worked at one plastic mold place. Any work because I was only getting like one shift a week. Couldn't pay the bills on that.

Some workers also report that the instability in work hours has brought workers into the union office asking for money, pleading for hours, and/or using the union food bank. Reflecting on the workforce's increasing use of charity coinciding with dropping part-time hours, Catherine states:

There have been employees who have been full-time and dropped down to part-time. And part-time that used to get four or five shifts now get two shifts. So, they are struggling to make ends meet. They're working too many hours to collect unemployment and not enough to make ends meet. We're seeing more of our employees reaching out to other services where they can go and get some help. They are actually going to the United Way.

In 2008 bargaining, management proposed moving the department ratio cap of 33 percent part-time and 67 full-time to 50/50 while making some departments completely part-time (Vander Doelen 2008). In 2014 bargaining, the employer proposed eliminating the ratio cap altogether (Brownell 2014). These proposals did not materialize. Nonetheless, despite the 33 percent cap, the casino workforce sees, as Chris phrases it, the "devious way" their employer makes certain classifications above this ratio. All casino workers report the employer consistently using the maximum (33 percent) of part-time workers in each department. Many workers express suspicion that more and more full-time positions are being lost through layoffs and replaced by part-time workers.

While departments have a 33 percent part-time cap, a single department has many job classifications. As a result, some employees are concerned that their job classification may be

made into 100 percent part-time work within their department. Workers who occupy what is treated as a lower job classification (i.e., lower skilled) feel that their jobs are more vulnerable to becoming fully part-time. For instance, cooks and kitchen stewards and slot technicians and slot attendants are considered part of the same department. Since cooks and slot technicians are viewed as a higher skilled worker (and presumably more valuable to the employer), kitchen stewards and slot attendants fear that their classification may become solely part-time while the cooks and slot technicians take up more full-time positions. For instance, Chris states, “well over 50 percent [of slot attendants] are part-time,” yet the departmental ratio will be maintained since they are merged with the slot technicians who tend to be full-time. This move towards part-time work is described as the initial step towards making the lower valued jobs obsolete, and eventually subsuming the duties of these lower skilled positions into the higher valued classifications. Effectively, the fear of becoming part-time is palpable and the feeling that ‘no one is safe’ circulates.

While the part-time ratio established in 2004 remains, the classification of “casual” was introduced in the 2011-2014 Collective Agreement. This third-tier worker is “utilized for the purpose of promotions, events, banquets, conventions, emergency situations, or similar activities” (Collective Agreement 2011-2014). In contrast to part-time workers, there is no cap on the number of casual workers allowed, presenting a concern for the casino workforce given the broad array of potential “utilization purposes.” As of 2015, there were 200+ casual employees (Unifor 2015). Casuals are also not covered under several articles in the collective bargaining agreement, like: vacation pay, overtime, pension plan, and health and welfare. For instance, unlike the full- and part-time workers, casual workers are permitted only two undocumented absences per year. While still considered unionized employees, they are not actually covered by the majority of articles under the Collective Agreement and, by default, fall under the baseline regulations of the Employment Standards Act of Ontario.

The casual workforce experiences more erratic scheduling and hours than the part-time workers.<sup>106</sup> Whenever needed, there is an expectation that the casual worker be present.<sup>107</sup> If not, the casual worker risks not being scheduled for any further shifts. Many casino workers see the introduction of the casual worker as part of the employer's desire to lessen its obligations to the unionized workforce. As Rick states, casual workers represent the casino's "bigger agenda of knowing where they want to go and little by little they chip away at us [full-time workers]."

The casino's employment of more part-time and casual employees is a move away from the initial promise of 'good jobs.' As Sara states, this does not equal the promise of "true full-time employment." Sara sarcastically imitates the voice of those who made these promises, laughingly remarking, "Oh ya, you'll have these types of jobs, they'll hire this amount of people!"

### *Outsourcing*

*And I mean why did we get a casino then if we are going to outsource? When we could have outsourced... like I don't even know how to explain it but. ... if this is so important to our city, and it's supposed to bring Windsor better paying jobs, and they are outsourcing to bring in cheaper jobs... I don't know. – Jill, Casino Worker*

The casino also cuts costs through outsourcing. Instead of managing the operations of a particular outlet within the casino, which would utilize unionized workers on Casino Windsor's payroll, the casino has leased out spaces to other private companies. Through outsourcing, the casino collects rent while incurring little cost. Outsourcing initially began in 2006 with a Starbucks outlet. Since then, Casino Windsor has more aggressively used outsourcing.<sup>108</sup> In 2015, there were four non-union outlets—Starbucks, Taza (restaurant), Johnny Rockets

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<sup>106</sup> As stated in the Collective Agreement (2014-2018: 50): A Casual employee must submit their availability one month in advance and the Company will endeavor to accommodate this request provided it is reasonable to do so. The Company will post the working schedules for Casual employees two weeks in advance. The Company shall give Casual employees at least 72 hours' notice of its intent to cancel or change a shift, except in the case of Emergency. "Emergency" is defined as the cancellation of an event, function, banquet, or other circumstances beyond the control of the Company.

<sup>107</sup> As stated in the Collective Agreement (2014-2018: 51): A Casual employee must be available to work when scheduled. Should a Casual employee fail to attend work for any reason other than an Emergency Leave as provided for in the Employment Standards Act of Ontario or an approved medical leave, he/she shall be subject to discipline and may be subject to termination. A Casual employee shall have no more than two (2) unauthorized absences within a contract year. Discipline history is kept for a period of 12 months.

<sup>108</sup> The venues which are not outsourced are: The Artist Café, Neros Steakhouse, Caesars Essentials Gift Shop, Legends Sportbar, and VU Bar.

(restaurant), and Landou (accessory and jewelry kiosk). An outsourced night club and spa is also scheduled to open in unused space in late 2015. Diane reflects on the expansion of outsourced outlets:

Listen, they did it and they didn't even tell us they were doing it at first. I mean, to be honest with you, we have Starbucks, that's non-union and that's been there forever and a day. That should have been challenged back then. We have Landou in the middle by our escalators and they sell purses and jewelry. And for me that just takes business away from our [unionized] gift shop. Now Taza, non-union, it used to be the unionized Augustus restaurant.

With the expansion of outsourced venues and its threat to unionized employees and membership growth, the union achieved language in Collective Agreement 2014-2018 which attempts to limit the proliferation of outsourced businesses. The agreement states: "The Company [i.e., Casino Windsor] will not subcontract out any work normally performed by employees in the bargaining unit that results in the layoff of any bargaining unit employee" (120). Before this contract, Sara states, "We had absolutely nothing [prohibitive language]. So, they could have rented this out, that out." While the above language does hinder outsourcing through the direct layoff of employees, it does not protect against unused space in the casino becoming non-unionized, outsourced venues. Moreover, the language does not allude to how the space became unused or how long it was unused for. This vagueness is also on the minds of casino workers. As Ryan states:

The talk was to close the Artist Café and outsource it, so the union stepped up and said in the contract as long as the restaurant is open they can't outsource it. But my comment was, 'Well if they close the restaurant, then they can outsource it.' When it was Augustus they were just like, 'We are going to close it. Oh, tomorrow, we got a buyer, Taza wants it.' There's a loop hole and they know it. They shut down a restaurant for a day, they'll outsource it.

There is also uncertainty among workers regarding how long this "protective" language will last, as there is concern that in the next round of collective bargaining—2018—this language could be taken away.

For employees, the use of outsourcing is viewed as a cost-cutting method which increasingly calls into question the longevity of unionized employment in the facility. Therefore, as the casino expands its offerings—like a nightclub—to remain competitive, the unionized workforce is not expanding with it. Indeed, management is excluding the unionized workforce

from benefiting from expansion into ‘non-gaming options’ as non-union workers fill these additional positions, further decreasing the facilities ratio of unionized to non-unionized employees.<sup>109</sup>

Sara discusses the more general push to get rid of unionized employment: “If they [management] has enough opportunity, they just want to keep the core [gaming] business and sell off everything else.” The increasing use of outsourcing is also viewed as connected to the provincial government’s aim of “Gaming Modernization,” which officially began in 2012 (Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation 2014). Kate discusses the employer and the provinces larger desire to “Shed their responsibilities and not to focus on the extra stuff. So just gaming and the booze. Not the restaurants and the extras. Really. So just suck up revenue through gambling. And the job part, they don’t care.” The provincial mandate of Gaming Modernization is to “transition” the province’s resort casinos (Office of the Auditor General 2014). This transition entails outsourcing restaurant and entertainment responsibilities to “experts,” meaning more and more workers will fall outside the Collective Agreement. Sandra discusses the potential of “outsourcing every job in that place,” saying:

I have a feeling, and I heard a rumour, that Casino Windsor only wants to deal with anyone who has a gaming license. That would mean anyone on the floor. So, slot attendants, dealers you know. They only want to deal with those departments. They are not in the business of cleaning rooms, restaurants. Like laundry, you know, they could have all kinds of other businesses doing that job for a lot less. And I am glad that they are not ... I hope they’ll never be able to do that. [...] That is kind of scary.

### *Increasing Discipline*

*I started off just being a slot cashier, where I just took in tokens. And then they added on more [tasks], and then they added on more. And by the time it got to this point, there was so much more that we had to learn and do, and there were so much less of us. I mean at one time I think there were like 400 cashiers. Last year when I left I think there was only 60. I think because everything was so strict, you had to get everything right [...]. Like if you put a bill in the wrong place, that could be a day suspension for you. [...] If you are handing out all this money you want to make sure it is right, that could be your job on the*

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<sup>109</sup> Union representatives also discussed the futility in trying to unionize these workers as these outlets exhibit a high turnover rate due to the low-wages and relatively young workforce. As a result, a unionization drive of this workforce has not occurred. In addition, union representatives do not see these outlets as offering enough of a workforce (re: union dues) to justify a unionization drive. Thus, the costs of unionizing this difficult to unionize venue may not be ‘worth it.’ More importantly, due to different franchises running each outlet, a different unionization drive and collective bargaining agreement would have to be made for each venue.

*line. The job probably quadrupled in responsibility and pace. [...] I was terrified. I was waiting to be fired. Constantly second guessing. Got to the point, and I thought this was it. So, I was really lucky and really blessed that I got the call for a permanent [position outside cashiering] and I took it right away. But there are more cashiers there that are in the same boat that I was in then, now. And they can't get out. I come down to the locker room and they are standing down there crying. And that's normal. That stress there is normal. – Patty, Casino Worker*

Casino Windsor workers also point to the increasing disciplinary action that they have experienced throughout the years. A local labour leader, Tom, comments on the use of constant surveillance to discipline and eliminate workers and how this is exceptional at the casino:

The casino abuses, what I believe, and what our union believes, is the spirit of what trust means, what integrity means, what honesty means. [...] Imagine now [*pause*] being watched 7-24. [...] And in an industry that's got such great surveillance and sophisticated surveillance, and surveillance that they could look at tapes on an ongoing basis. We believe that in a lot of circumstances they look for trouble versus dealing with real trouble. We have multiple grievances as a result of this. And that doesn't happen in any other environment. [...] The surveillance is tough and the definition of honesty and integrity is so narrow that you'd almost have to be God not to be caught off guard from time to time.

Workers view the high level of surveillance from the employer and the increasing use of disciplinary action as a means to cut labour costs.<sup>110</sup> Workers also treat the increasing number of disciplinary actions as connected to falling revenues. In fact, mapping onto when revenues started to decline in 2001, during 2004-2008 collective agreement negotiations, the casino workforce went on a 41-day strike for “respect,” which was code for resisting surveillance, disciplinary action, and dismissal. For instance, a casino worker signaled the importance of respect as it relates to discipline, saying to the *Windsor Star* during the strike, “‘If they give us 30 or 40 cents a year raise, fine. But we want respect. We don't want to be written up for every little thing. Or suspended. Or fired’” (Pearson 2004a). On the picket line, other casino workers complained about being disciplined for punching in early, being disciplined in front of customers, and being disciplined over their appearance, like hair and nail polish (Pearson 2004b). Reflecting on this strike, Sandra comments:

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<sup>110</sup> As per the 2014-2018 Collective Agreement, “The Company acknowledges that it will not utilize surveillance videos to measure the job performance of its employees but will continue to have the right to utilize surveillance videos for the purpose of safeguarding its assets and maintaining the integrity and security of the Casino.” Yet, with the broad term of “safeguarding its assets and maintaining integrity and security of the Casino” the company does use surveillance for the purposes of discipline.

We were trying to make a point to our employer that there was no respect in the workplace from our employer to employees. So, a lot people felt a lot of disrespect in our workplace. A lot of hatred for a job and felt trapped in it. [...] It was that contract [2004] where we voted 'no' [to the union endorsed collective agreement] and we were out. And I remember standing in front of the casino and everyone was chanting, "Respect, respect." Yeah, it was major.

Casino workers refer to how management's use of discipline against employees has increased with falling revenues. For instance, Catherine comments on how management did not discipline workers when revenues were high:

I think the atmosphere in the casino has changed. Where it used to be more of a family type atmosphere and now it's like the workers are looking over their back kind of thing. I think because money got tighter for the casino, they look at different things, so things that they might have let slide before, all of a sudden it becomes a bigger issue than they were before.

Lucy also discusses the increasing "strictness" and its relation to terminating employees:

I think that they have gotten a lot stricter and I don't know if that's because there has been a massive reduction in the workforce or they are trying to be selective about who they get rid of. They are very much, 'You are bad, you are bad,' [*imitating a disciplining voice*] to the workers. Want to discipline you. It breeds miserable employees.

Anne comments:

I think that there was a sense of people getting along better at first, but I think that was when a lot of the money was coming in. [...] It's just become like an us versus them. They just don't want to talk, they want to put people out, 'See you later!' Very quick to pull the trigger. Working for Caesars casino, I really just hate it. It is awful. A complete soul sucker. The management there, nowhere else will you get put on Investigative Suspension on a whim.

Anne's reference to "put[ting] people out" denotes management's use of "Investigative Suspension" during disciplinary action. While management investigates a potential disciplinary infraction, "the Company has the right to suspend the employee, with/without pay, for up to five days" (Collective Agreement 2014-2018). Many casino workers spoke to management's increased use of Investigative Suspension. Sara says:

People are getting put on suspension constantly. That's their motive, 'Put them out! We'll deal with it later.' And they don't pay us, we get no pay whatsoever. They are starving us. That's exactly what they are doing. So, behave, behave when you come back – or you're termed [terminated].

Workers see Investigative Suspension as another cost-saving measure, where the company cuts expenditures on wages to recoup costs.

The increasing use of disciplinary action, and what workers consider “disrespect,” has led workers to feel devalued by their employer. The lack of “respect” from their employer signals to workers that they lack value, and are indistinguishable, disposable, and interchangeable. As Ryan states, “Between you and the company, there is nothing, you are known as a number.” Lucy also comments on how the employer treats the workforce as replaceable:

We think the company treats the employees like the employees owe them something. And the employees, we work really hard and we do a good job and that’s why we get the wage. But the employer treats us like, ‘Well go get a job somewhere else. We’ll get somebody else.’ And we don’t feel valued as employees.

Mike also comments on management’s ‘take it or leave it’ attitude, saying, “It’s less about having a good relationship [between management and workers] and more about ‘We are going to do this. What are you going to do about it? Leave if you don’t like it.’ It’s very heavy-handed.”

Relatedly, Samantha notes:

When I first started, everybody was like excited and enjoyed it and now it’s, I hate to say, but such a miserable place to work. Like people say, ‘Well I am thankful I have the job.’ But yes, I am too, but I don’t like feeling like I have to be thankful that I have this job. You are making me feel like, ‘We can get rid of you and get somebody else.’ You know, and that’s how lot of people in the casino feel. Like they [employer] have actually had questionnaires where they have asked us, ‘If you could get a comparable job, pay, would you leave?’ ‘In a heartbeat!’ That’s what the general workforce says because it is such a tough place to work.

As Samantha describes, management not only considers the external labour market, but gauges the workforce’s desire for mobility through workplace surveys. Indeed, workers see management using negative sanctions to gain discipline and effort from the workforce while, arguably, management is aware that workers would leave, but likely will not since comparable compensation is not available elsewhere. Finally, Lucy also discusses feeling undervalued by management, saying, “Being told that you are not good enough all the time, but if you look in publications, we have the best customer service. But the employer does not treat their staff that way. Everybody is horrible.” Above, Lucy signals the disconnect between the management’s treatment of employees and workers’ provision of quality customer service. Below, I explore



why Casino Windsor workers not only remain despite the lack of “respect” but provide “the best customer service.”

### *Captive Labour Market/Immobility: Structurally Coerced “Award Winning” Customer Service*

Despite declining rewards and conditions, Casino Windsor workers not only remain—reflected in the tight seniority<sup>111</sup>—but provide *award winning* customer service. This effort is recognized by the external awards Casino Windsor receives for its customer service. In 2013, casino patrons named Casino Windsor the best hotel and gaming resort in the Detroit region in *Casino Player* magazine. This was the thirteenth consecutive year Casino Windsor was named the best gambling facility in the region (Casino Player 2013). In addition, in July 2014, Casino Windsor was awarded TripAdvisor’s Certificate of Excellence Award for Customer Service, the fourth time the casino received the award, which rated the property the best out of the 35 hotels in the area (Battagello 2016b; Tomkins 2016). James Hollohazy, director of resort operations at Casino Windsor, praised Casino Windsor employees for their exceptional service in the *Windsor Star* (Battagello 2016a), saying, “‘It is an honour to be awarded this prestigious award. I am incredibly proud of the unparalleled service our employees provide every day to make our guests feel welcome and appreciated.’”

Casino Windsor workers not only remain but provide quality customer service. This service is the result of the workforce’s immobility, as the workers exist in a captive labour market. Three defining features of this workforce’s context has rendered them immobile/captive: 1) the Windsor area’s pattern of record high unemployment; 2) casino workers’ inability to find comparable employment; and 3) the casino’s placement on an international border.

### *Windsor’s Unemployment Rate*

According to casino workers, the high unemployment rate in Windsor constitutes a strong deterrent to quitting their jobs despite their expressed dissatisfaction with declining rewards and conditions at Casino Windsor. For instance, Diane states, “Where it is the highest unemployment rate in Canada, where are you going to go?” At the end of 2015, Windsor’s unemployment rate

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<sup>111</sup> For instance, workers consider low seniority as 20 years and four months instead of 20 years and eight months. This is the result of low turnover and lack of new hires.

was 10.4 percent—compared to the national average of seven percent—while, since 2001, Windsor has had the most months with the highest unemployment rate in the country, a total of 66 months as of July 2015 (Thompson 2015).

High unemployment not only increases the likelihood that workers will remain at their current employer but can also compel the workers to increase their work intensity at their current employer (Green and Weisskopf 1990). Typically, where unions are present, however, effort tends to be mediated through a bilateral bargain, where greater union power equals lower levels of worker effort (Andrews and Simmons 1995). Despite union presence,<sup>112</sup> Casino Windsor management's use of video surveillance combined with the threat of dismissal functions to discipline and elicit effort from Casino Windsor workers.<sup>113</sup> In the primary sector, management tends to elicit worker effort mainly by positive motivation associated with 'bureaucratic control' (Edwards 1979).<sup>114</sup> In contrast, Casino Windsor utilizes the threat of dismissal—enforced through video surveillance—combined with the area's high unemployment rate to ensure workers not only remain but 'work hard' (Green and Weisskopf 1990).

#### *Absence of Comparable Compensation*

The Casino Windsor workforce's 'captivity' is further founded in their position in a region where comparable compensation for similar work is not available. Casino Windsor, due largely to collective bargaining, provides compensation which is higher than what can be found in any low-skill service workplace in the region. The Casino Windsor workforce and management are both well-aware of this. For instance, during a 2014 interview, the president of Casino Windsor acknowledges that Casino Windsor's compensation package cannot be found anywhere else in Ontario:

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<sup>112</sup> Where union presence is a general feature of being part of the primary sector (Green and McIntosh 1998).

<sup>113</sup> Layard et al. (1991) argued, further, that when union power is low, unions will only bargain over wages, allowing management to determine effort, with the result that effort levels will be higher than in establishments with a powerful union presence.

<sup>114</sup> Some previous studies (Green and Weisskopf 1990; Edwards 1979; Rebitzer 1987) have argued that the primary and secondary labour sectors may differ in the means of eliciting effort, with secondary sector workers tending to be subject to external disciplines such as the threat of a spell of unemployment and its attendant costs and workers in the primary sector more likely to be courted with positive incentives, including company human resource management policies.

We are seen as a good employer, probably wages aren't what you get in the manufacturing side, but our average wage is \$18-19 dollars an hour which is very high for the service sector, and you've got great benefits. If you are a server, you are not gonna make anywhere more in Ontario than you will here.

The compensation offered at Casino Windsor increases the cost of job loss for this workforce (Bowles 1985; Shapiro and Stiglitz 1984). Put simply, both workers and management recognize that there are no comparable jobs with such compensation being offered in the region or province. Higher compensation raises the cost of job loss, providing workers an incentive to supply effort (Green and McIntosh 1998).

Casino workers often reflect on how they see few employment alternatives outside of minimum wage work. Workers report that, with nowhere else to go, job loss from the casino results in a sharp decline in living standards. As Lucy, who is concerned about being pushed to part-time, states, "If I were to lose this job, there is no other job here [Windsor] that's more than minimum wage that I could get if.... I don't know what we would do." Indeed, because of these workers' low skillset, only minimum wage work is available outside of the casino. One worker, Heather, sarcastically comments on the alternative employment options in Windsor, "But 'Oh wait, Global Sutherland [call center] is hiring!' They just had their big news thing and I was like 'Ah yay! \$11 an hour jobs!'" Another worker, Anne, reflects on the external labour market, the human capital of the workforce, and lower compensation:

I think we have a contingency of people here now that are used to making the money that we make that have based a lifestyle and a family style around that kind of a lifestyle. [...] How do you adjust to making anywhere between \$5-9 less an hour? And plus, your benefits. [...] There's not a lot of full-time employment right now around here [Windsor], so now you're going to have to juggle two part-time jobs. It would be very detrimental. [...] It's a well-paying job for somebody that doesn't have postsecondary education, where else are you going to go and make that kind of money, that kind of benefits?

Due to the relatively high compensation, workers look to stay at the casino, which is reflected in the low turnover, long tenure, and extremely tight seniority due to minimal new hires. Discussing the low turnover at Casino Windsor in relation to compensation, Diane says:

You know what, unfortunately, I mean if they [the employer] thought they were going to have this sort of a business with these rates of pay and have a high turnover... like how many people go to Ford's and quit? You don't quit! When you get a good job, good benefits, you stay!

Lucy, hired in 1998, also discusses the low turnover and tight seniority, saying:

I have been here since 1998, maybe that was important to say, that I was hired in 1998. It's only four years later [since Casino Windsor opened], but I can only get maybe one or two full-time jobs on the floor based on that. And four years doesn't seem like much, but in THIS job, it is huge just because so many were hired, so many people that just don't leave this job, right, this is a high paying job.

Matt also discusses how the casino offers lifelong employment, yet adds the caveat that the casino's management would prefer more turnover:

So, I mean ya it was a good thing where people go 'Hey it is another Chrysler or another Ford's or something that is there for a while.' Because I think, at least in this area, we still have that mentality that when you are in a job, the majority of the people tend to stay there for 30 to 35 years. At that job, I remember someone in upper management at the casino, they had this conversation with me about turnover. Because in Vegas you might not be at Caesars for five or 10 years, you could go from this company to this company to this company... and so they said, 'Well I think it should be that way here,' and I go, 'Well the only reason that you're saying that is because the further we go and attain seniority, the higher our pay is.'

Despite declining working conditions and increased disciplinary action from management, Casino Windsor workers continue to treat their employment at Casino Windsor as a lifelong job. Indeed, in terms of tenure and turnover, this workforce is 'loyal.' This loyalty, however, is coerced in the sense that it results from the lack of comparably compensated employment in the region's low-skill service sector.

With the casino having opened in 1994, many casino workers are now in their later working years.<sup>115</sup> This makes the possibility of facing the external labour market particularly negative. For many casino workers, their current age impacts their awareness of their limited options outside of the casino. For instance, Matt reflects:

There are the ones that say, 'There are jobs out there, it's just that people don't want them' and I'll be like 'No, let's classify that now.' Ya, there's jobs out there but really are you going to go work at a Walmart? Are you going, no offense to the people here, but are you going to work at a Tim Hortons? And you know, you have three or four kids, a family. You are going from having this full-time job at a higher wage and, really, you are going to flip burgers at McDonalds when you're 50?

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<sup>115</sup> The average age of my Casino Windsor respondents was 46. During interviews, casino workers reported that casual workers tended to be younger.

As Matt alludes, the increasing age of the workforce also brings a sort of disgust to these other employment options. Denise also comments on the workforce's age increasing the difficulty of finding alternate employment:

Where is a 54-year-old lady going to find a job? The workforce is aging and it has been open for over 20 years, so all of us who were 20/30 years old when it started, we are getting to be 50 and 60 years old. And like, what? We are going to end up at Arby's or something? Because that is pretty much where everyone got pulled from, but it would be horrid.

Diane also comments on the interplay of age with the inability to find comparable earnings elsewhere, saying, "You'd have to leave the city. You'd have to go find work somewhere else. And they don't hire at this stage of the game [age] right, for this rate of pay. Let alone benefits." Workers recognize that there is 'nowhere else to go' that could offer comparable compensation in addition to the large pool of reserve labour in Windsor.

Workers' feelings of immobility and the inability to find comparable compensation elsewhere were also connected to job classification and to the non-transferable nature of the skillset. For instance, Betty states, "Once you're a dealer, where else you're going to go? Who else hires dealers?" Sandra also discusses the casino workforce's immobility resulting from a job's skillset, like dealers:

Tips have progressively gone down. They are still in a better position than outside of the casino. It is hard to move if you don't have... especially being 20 years as a dealer, what kind of experience do you have to fall back on? What kind of resume are you going to have going out into the workforce? No one else hires dealers except for casinos. Yeah if you are willing to leave, where are you going to go? You don't have any experience. 20 years and you have no experience. And what are you going to do? Reflect back from 1994? That's too far back. Anyone looking to hire you, isn't going to hire you. You're stuck.

### *An International Border*

Casino Windsor's placement on the border with Detroit and Michigan offered Casino Windsor a large population with a demand for gambling (Burnside 1992; Hornberger 1992). Soon after, however, Detroit passed a referendum to host casinos. Losing its monopoly in 1999-2000, Casino Windsor faced competition with three major gaming operators in Detroit—all four casinos being within six miles of each other. This competition placed increased pressure on Casino Windsor's management to cut costs. The international border results in Casino Windsor workers experiencing the pressures of increased competition for regional gambling dollars

without a corresponding increase in employment opportunities. Unlike Las Vegas, where workers can “jump from casino to casino” if unhappy with their employment, in Windsor, casino workers cannot move across the Canada-US border. For instance, Diane compares work at Casino Windsor to casino work in places like Las Vegas:

In Nevada, I can work at MGM today and get frustrated and say, ‘Go kiss my ass! I’m done!’ and then go get hired at Caesars. Or I could get hired at Bally’s right. So, I mean they will generally go from casino to casino.

Casino Windsor workers are structurally coerced into treating their employment at Casino Windsor as a lifelong job. Indeed, organizational loyalty, in the sense of commitment to the employer, is not a choice. Another casino worker, Sara, discusses the decline of job quality and the immobility of the workforce since there are no other Canadian casinos in the region, saying:

At least once every five years they [Las Vegas casino workers] are going to a different casino to work at. Trying to get either better wages or better tips. Whereas here, we have no place to go to. You are only here. Yep. There isn’t another casino to jump into. So, you can’t try to advance.

Mike also discusses the Casino Windsor workers lack of mobility:

If I am a dealer at Harrah’s and I am not happy there or whatever, if I don’t get along with my boss, I can easily go across the street and work at Flamingo or you know Luxor or at a casino that I want. The workers in Vegas are more transient and there’s probably less of a feeling of a need to battle for what you need to get done and I think that might show in the in the employment practices in the employer.

Rick also compares Las Vegas casino workers’ experiences of ‘flexibility’ or mobility to the lack of mobility of Casino Windsor workers:

I think that there is more flexibility in moving from company to company in Vegas and property to property. See here in Windsor this is it. This is it! We don’t have programs like they have in Vegas where you could go work on a cruise ship for a couple of years and then go back to this casino or go apply at a casino down the street and then work there for a couple of years, but here, this is it! Where are you going to go?

### *“We Keep this Place Open”: Reclaiming Worth through Quality Customer Service*

Under these conditions, casino workers have internalized the mantra that providing quality customer service in a competitive gaming market is crucial to ensuring their livelihoods remain intact. Casino workers believe that customer service is what sets Casino Windsor apart

from the competition and keeps Casino Windsor open. For instance, Karl speaks to how the customer service at Casino Windsor is “unparalleled”:

The casino makes it [Windsor] a destination. We win, we win everything: best gaming in the Detroit region; best steakhouse in Detroit region; best tables in the Detroit region. Just the customer service is unparalleled. If you’ve ever been to one over there, it’s not the same.

Many workers also suggest, however, that management’s push to cut labour costs is done without accounting for its potential impact on customer service. Despite these cuts and the potential of negatively impacting the workforce’s ability to provide quality service, casino workers stress that it was still very important for them to provide quality customer service. For instance, Jim speaks to the relationship between management’s labour saving measures—like servers working between four different restaurants within the casino—and customer service:

They [management] just want to make sure they juggle the bodies, and then they will deal with that [customer service]. You can’t really worry about the customer service when you have that mentality. We [the workers] have to worry about it. The servers. But if I go work in the Artist [restaurant] and I haven’t been in the Artist Café in two months, and all of a sudden, I have to go there. It is a different set up, it is a different menu, and you got to talk to customers and go explain the stuff on the menu. And I don’t know the menu. At Legends [restaurant], I know it like the back of my hand. I am there every day, and it’s a comfort zone too right. It’s a customer service thing and I think that gets lost with management.

Rick also discusses management’s use of skeletal staffing as a labour-saving strategy and management’s disconnect from understanding its impact on customer service. Put simply, casino workers see their effort as allowing Casino Windsor to remain competitive despite management’s actions, as the workers go “above and beyond in terms of customer service”:

We’ve been able to survive so many of the hurdles we have had: 9/11, non-smoking, three casinos across the border. One thing after another, after another, and we keep bouncing back. And it is not because of anything management does. It is because of the job that we put forth. No matter how we are shit on by the company, we still go above and beyond in terms of customer service. And that is what I don’t understand. It is not about dollars and cents when you are talking about a casino. Like if you don’t have staff, you can’t provide customer service right. To me that is a no-brainer but they [management] don’t get it. It is all about dollars and cents. They throw it in your face all the time, ‘It is all about customer service, all about customer service’ but how can you provide customer service when you can’t? We’re ranked the best around and we still get it done. But it’s crazy, when you are so short staffed you can’t absorb a single sick call.

Devin also discusses the workers' ability to provide quality customer service despite conflict with management, saying:

We have to give ourselves credit, the employees, we don't take that [management-worker conflict] out on the floor. It's kind of like a bad relationship that we keep quiet, we don't talk about it, 'Hey everything is going great, no problem!' So, for the customer service part. [...] It is about pushing out the product and hopefully the product sells. Here the only product that you are trying to sell is based on what the employee is giving the customer, right. We know what keeps this place alive. It isn't management. And they [management] have been lucky because [...] we come out with a smile on our faces no matter how bad it might be and like you know [*fakes a smile*].

Diane also comments on the disconnect between management's treatment of the workforce and the workforce's provision of customer service in relation to keeping the casino competitive and open, saying:

And I think from a worker's perspective [...] I can tell you, we don't feel any appreciation from [...] the higher ups. I mean because clearly if you have a regular customer, they don't come back because of the CEO or the CFO or the vice president, they come back because of the everyday workers and the treatment they get on the floor. [...] We are the ones keeping this place open! [...] I think there is a big disconnect between the people who make the decisions around here, and the people who do the job.

Heather also discusses the future of the casino in Windsor, cost-cutting, and the ability of the workforce to still provide award winning customer service:

It's still one of the most profitable casinos. [...] They are going to do their corporate thing and cut and cut and cut. And still expect service levels to stay the same. [...] Because no other properties get the scores that we do. In terms of customer satisfaction. We have an amazing workforce, like really, I couldn't tell you. And people say it time and time again, 'You people are so nice. Everyone here is so helpful.'

Matt discusses workers "proving management wrong" through customer service, saying:

Ya they [management] were okay with high turnover, and the majority of that is, you know, they say, 'People stay stagnant in a job' or whatever, and the employees have proven that wrong you know because like, we keep being touted as being the best for customer service.

Mike also discusses the connection between customer service and the future of the casino in Windsor, saying:

The Casino Player [magazine] does questionnaires every year and we've always done very well on the customer service and best overall resort and all those types of things. So, I think because we cater to our patrons better and the customer service makes the long term survivability good.



When asked about the future certainty of Caesars Entertainment Ltd. continuing to operate the provincially owned casino, casino workers often share their sense of uncertainty. Casino workers treat their provision of quality customer service as an avenue to ensure Caesars Entertainment Ltd. remains their operator. Workers see the Caesars branding as keeping Casino Windsor competitive in the regional gaming market. Margaret discusses the importance of customer service in relation to maintaining the Caesars branding, which she sees as crucial to maintaining employment numbers at the casino:

Customer service is very very important. [...] I worry that they'll leave [Caesars] and turn this place into a slot house. If we saw those changes [Caesars ceasing operations], the concerns that I have is that maybe they could do away with table games, maybe it could just be a slot house. And then, in saying that, maybe we could see them closing the gaming facility at you know three o'clock in the morning and reopening at 10 or what have you. But as long as we have that branding and that star rating, there is that whole experience that is attached to it. It is more about a customer service experience.

Workers reclaim a sense of value by laying claim to providing quality customer service, despite the losses and disciplinary actions they have experienced over the years. Providing quality customer service affirms their 'value' in the face of constant reminders (e.g., layoffs, Kaizen, part-time and casual work, outsourcing, disciplinary action, and surveillance) that they have little value. Furthermore, workers' reclamation of their value via quality customer service takes on an oppositional stance towards management. Indeed, as workers reclaim their own sense of respect—which was under threat due to declining working conditions and disciplinary actions—they also highlight that management does not appreciate or recognize the value workers bring in terms of customer service. Workers view management not recognizing this value as an error since Casino Windsor would not be viable without them.

### *Conclusion*

Casino Windsor initially provided economic opportunity (i.e., wages, tips, benefits, and union representation) and 'good jobs' for workers with employment histories in the low-skill service sector. Beginning in the early 2000s, however, wages began to stagnate and tips declined. The casino's management also seeks a more casual and flexible labour force while increasingly using disciplinary action against employees. Consequently, Casino Windsor workers have experienced a decline in job quality.

Previous research highlights the mobility of casino workers, either by ‘chasing tips’ (i.e., seeking employment at another casino) when dissatisfied with their employment and/or viewing their employment in the casino industry as temporary (Mutari and Figart 2015; Sallaz 2002, 2009; Taft 2016). In contrast, Casino Windsor operates in a captive labour market where workers lack mobility and are thus coerced into providing quality customer service. Casino workers remain and continue to provide award winning customer service for their employer despite declining rewards and increasing disciplinary action. The Windsor area’s record high unemployment rate, the absence of alternative employment offering comparable compensation, and Casino Windsor’s placement on an international border are three factors which render casino workers immobile. Casino Windsor workers do not view their ‘loyalty’ (i.e., low turnover) and provision of effort (i.e., award winning customer service) as a choice. Instead, workers see their provision of quality customer service—in spite of what they see as management’s reckless cost-cutting/labour saving strategies—as the main mechanism which keeps Casino Windsor open and their employment intact.

In the crudest sense, workers have likely earned more money at Casino Windsor than they would have if the casino had never opened. Yet, Casino Windsor workers share a story of loss and disempowerment, where precarious work and management’s disciplinary actions diminish workers’ value. However, casino workers cope with these losses through laying claim to the provision of ‘good service’ (Gibson and Papa 2000; Lucas 2011; Lucas and Buzzanell 2011). Casino Windsor workers cope with precarity and decline and reclaim their value through good service. In doing so, these workers, in their minds, become ‘special’ and unreplaceable in contrast to management’s efforts to make workers feel replaceable and valueless. Workers preserve some of their own sense of worth in the face of depersonalization at Casino Windsor.

When speaking about declining conditions and management’s disrespect, workers turn to the little value management offers while emphasizing workers’ quality service and value. In doing so, workers not only reclaim a sense of agency and worth, but also oppose management.<sup>116</sup> Stemming from the transformation of work quality over time (i.e., management betraying the casino workers’ expectations and prior experiences of job quality) Casino Windsor workers do

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<sup>116</sup> This can also be seen as class opposition, or the belief that the interests of management are at odds with those of the workers (Vallas 1987)

adopt an oppositional stance in stating that they matter, despite management's assertions otherwise (Gallie 1978; Vallas 1987).

These findings raise questions concerning the labour markets into which casino developments—which are state-sponsored and legitimized to host communities as ‘good job’ creators—are placed. With states/provinces increasingly using casinos as an economic revitalization and job creating strategy in devitalized regions (i.e., tending to locate in areas lacking other industries) researchers and policymakers must consider whether such developments will create and potentially exploit a captive labour supply, leading to the casino firm dominating the locality (e.g., company towns).

## Conclusion

In the early 1990s, Ontario was in the midst of a deep recession. This recession profoundly affected the automotive industry, an industry Windsor depended heavily on for much of its revenue generation and employment. The soon-to-be signed NAFTA was also on the horizon and seen as a major threat to the automotive industry. With the ruin of Detroit visible from across the river, Windsorites were concerned that a similar fate awaited them if they did not diversify their economy. Accordingly, the Ontario provincial government chose Windsor to host a resort-style casino. Casino Windsor—situated on the Detroit River and overlooking the Detroit skyline—was the first resort casino to be used as a redevelopment tool to cope with industrial decline (real or anticipated) in North America. Since then, governments in North America have increasingly turned to this strategy, particularly on state/provincial and international borders (Dayadan 2016).

Purveyors of casinos heavily rely on the notion that casinos contribute to the economic “public good” (i.e., revenues, diversification, and ‘good jobs’) to legitimize casino development in areas experiencing economic decline. Drawing on the case of Casino Windsor, I ask: ***Has the casino’s development served the “public good”?***—a goal legislatively mandated by the Ontario provincial government (The Government of Ontario 1993). Examining the process of acquiring and hosting Casino Windsor, from 1988 through 2015, provides a case to examine the public policy of using casinos as a redevelopment strategy in an ‘industrial town’ grappling with economic downturn and expected deindustrialization.

What casinos *do*—and *do not do*—for host communities concerning the “public good” remains debated. From an economic perspective, those considering whether casinos contribute to the economic “public good” tend to focus on aggregate indicators and impacts for host communities (Chang, Lai, and Wang 2010; Furlong 1998; Horvath and Paap 2012; Moufakkir 2002; Rephann et al. 1997; Richard 2010). Why and how disparate interest groups may benefit unequally, however, is not addressed. Other scholars suggest that host communities, and those who are to supposedly benefit (i.e., municipal interests and workers) from casino development, may ‘lose’ out while larger government and corporate interests ‘win’ (Klassen and Cosgrave 2009; Reith 2007; Ryan 2012). These studies do not, however, flesh out how these benefits become unequal, which results in inequality being presented as inevitable. Indeed, both

perspectives focus on outcome. In contrast, I unfurl the workings of power and how the distribution of the “public good” becomes unequal. Indeed, we can only challenge inequality if we understand how power operates.

Research has also not shown whether and how the spread of casinos, in a deindustrializing milieu, contributes to the “public good” of host communities. This is despite governments increasing use of casinos as a (re)development tool in locales grappling with industrial decline. While scholars have acknowledged the importance of where and when casino development occurs, they have not empirically examined how place and time matter. I examine how larger political and economic forces that play out in space and over time shape the power struggles behind casino development. These are the struggles which determine who gets the “public good.” Looking at casino development in a ‘company town’ experiencing economic decline over nearly a 30-year period, this thesis unpacks the interplay between history and individual circumstance in the power struggles over the distribution of the casino’s ‘good.’

### *Casino Windsor: A Provincially-Led Initiative?*

Much of the literature on casino development suggests that casinos represent a state-down imposition on struggling communities (Calvano and Andersson 2010; Klassen and Cosgrave 2009). Others claim that casinos offer an opportunity for municipal stakeholders and communities to pursue their growth interests (Felsenstein et al. 1999). Using the case of Casino Windsor, I complicate the existing literature, showing that it was both. The acquisition of Casino Windsor represented a “grassroots” initiative symbolizing a city’s ability to act in its own interest and provincial powers imposing this initiative on an economically struggling community. These findings enrich the literature on the power dynamics which underlie casino development.

In the early 1990s and expecting the loss of automotive jobs, Windsor stakeholders—comprised of local business, labour, and political interests—initiated what they viewed as a “grassroots” movement to bring a casino to Windsor. The declared aim of the casino was revenue generation for the municipality, economic diversification, and the provision of an alternate source of employment to its supposedly soon-to-be displaced auto workers. Windsor stakeholders, with community buy-in, did initially lead the drive to acquire a casino in Windsor. And, in the end, Windsor stakeholders were also effective in ‘winning’ a casino. This challenges

the dominant understanding that larger state/provincial powers impose casinos on host communities (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Klassen and Cosgrave 2009).

In the initial proposal for a casino, crafted by Windsor stakeholders, the casino was to be a smaller part of a larger diversification project. Provincial interests, however, co-opted this initial project to obtain a greater proportion of revenues from the region. The proposed casino shifted from a Monte Carlo-style casino as part of a larger development project to a Nevada-style resort casino and from government owned and operated to a public-private owner and operating agreement. This transformation had major consequences for the proportion of revenue the municipality received for hosting the casino (i.e., owned by the provincial government and operated by a Las Vegas consortium rather than owned and operated under a provincial-municipal partnership), the type of diversification the casino would enable (i.e., a self-contained, big box form of development rather than a development integrated with other downtown (re)development initiatives), and the sort of employment the casino would offer (i.e., workers reliant on tips employed by a Las Vegas consortium rather than Crown employees/public servants). The proportion of revenue Windsor has received, the sort of diversification the casino has come to represent, and the type of employment the casino has offered is a far cry from what Windsor stakeholders were initially pursuing.

I find that the provincial government eventually co-opted the form Casino Windsor would take. The Ontario provincial government wielded its ability to award casino licenses over Windsor stakeholders. This equaled Windsor stakeholders having little choice but to accept a new development which served provincial over municipal interests. When larger provincial powers became involved, the distribution of the 'good' at the municipal level changed in an unfavourable direction (i.e., amount of revenue, type of diversification, and type of employment). This contrasts with arguments which suggest that casino developments place municipalities and communities in the powerful position of holding gaming licenses which gaming corporations "chase" (Felsenstein et al. 1999: 410). Instead, provincial governments hold the resource and power of gaming licenses.

While Windsor stakeholders were speaking of the scope and form of the casino and the revenue it would generate for municipal coffers, larger provincial interests capitalized on Windsor's fear of anticipated automotive decline to put provincial interests over host community interests. In fact, provincial interests used competition between economically depressed cities for

Ontario's first casino license to gain leverage over Windsor stakeholders (Hall 2006). I find the province was willing and able to utilize inter-urban competition between economically depressed cities to implement a project which prioritized provincial interests over municipal interests.

While casinos continue to be sold as revenue generators and a source for economic diversification for host communities, the specific power struggles and deal making between interest groups—state/provincial, local/municipal interests, and corporate—dramatically affect *how much* a host community will benefit and what sort of diversification a casino will bring. Indeed, such negotiations critically shape whether and how a casino will contribute to the “public good.” This case demonstrates that the broader health of their local economy heavily affects *how much* host community stakeholders can vie for their interests during negotiations. The economic desperation of a host community during these deliberations can significantly affect the leverage a municipality can wield. In the Windsor case, the severe recession in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the anticipation of NAFTA meant Windsor had limited negotiating power. Windsor stakeholders did not see themselves as being in a position to turn down the dramatically, provincially, altered vision of Casino Windsor.

These findings unearth the power struggle between local and provincial interests in negotiating the shape and form of Canada's first resort casino. Interestingly, Windsor stakeholders now maintain that the casino's acquisition was a “grassroots” movement that they initiated for the “public good” of the community and with Windsorites' support. This framing, I contend, functions to discursively manage the eventual powerlessness of Windsor stakeholders. This discourse also insulates the casino from criticism since Windsor stakeholders and the broader community ‘got what they wanted.’ The inadvertent effect of Windsor stakeholders not unpacking power dynamics and emphasizing their entrepreneurial capacity is the framing of municipal entrepreneurial efforts as a viable pathway and effective strategy for cities experiencing economic decline to pursue their growth interests (Lowe 2008; Oliver 2011; Schilling and Logan 2008; Wilson and Wouters 2003). This is despite the evidence suggesting that the intervention of larger provincial powers to secure their own interests over municipal/local interests is alive and well (Ward 2003).

*From a One- to Two-Company Town*

Provincial interests and Windsor stakeholders drew on the downturn of the automotive industry to legitimize the transformed casino project to the Windsor community. They predicted that this downturn would only intensify with the signing of NAFTA. The larger resort-style casino would have the capacity to economically prop-up the soon-to-be deindustrializing Windsor. Provincial and Windsor stakeholders heavily justified the Nevada-style resort casino to the community as an employment tool to transition displaced auto workers.

In examining the initial identified employee pool the casino was to employ and who it actually ended up employing, my findings complicate the view that casinos represent regions moving from an industrial to a postindustrial economy (Balzarini and Shlay 2016; Calvano and Andersson 2010; DiGaetano and Lawless 1999; McCarthy 2002; Wacker 2006). I reveal that the job losses in automotive did not happen when they were expected to, so the loss offset by growth did not occur as anticipated. Next, I discover that the casino functioned to *pull in* workers from the service sector rather from automotive. Later, when automotive workers could have used these jobs, they were no longer available.

Countering expectations, Windsor's automotive industry experienced an upturn in the mid-1990s due to US vehicle demand which resulted in the casino pulling its workforce mainly from the low-wage—and predominately female—service/hospitality sector. This employment *shift* is significant in that it directly affected whether and how the casino would contribute to the “public good.” The casino, in pulling workers from the low-wage, low-skilled service sector, offered economic mobility in terms of increased compensation for these workers. Had the casino provided employment to former automotive workers, it would have yielded downward economic mobility for automotive's largely male workforce.

It is unclear if the casino would have been such a success independent of the automotive resurgence. The casino's initial years of success were concurrent with an automotive boom in the region. The immediate and intense desperation of Windsor stakeholders—as a result of the recession—during their lobbying effort for a casino ceded prior to the opening of Casino Windsor. Indeed, the automotive recession in Windsor ended right before the casino opened. However, when the automotive industry declined, so too did the casino. Windsor stakeholders also misjudged the lag between the signing, implementation, and effect of free trade while underestimating the Canadian automotive industry's strategic position vis-a-vis the US and its dependence on US vehicle demand. The casino's justification centering on the fear of NAFTA



was misguided in terms of when the effects would be felt, which would not begin to materialize until the mid-2000s (Ravindra and Shinnan 2000).

Windsor's deindustrialization and the expected transition to a 'postindustrial reality' was not linear nor absolute. Indeed, while Windsor was a site for policy experimentation via casino development, Windsor's 'postindustrial shift' did not transpire as anticipated. Instead, the casino's development funneled low-wage service sector workers from diverse service/hospitality jobs into the casino thus 'closing the door' to Windsor automotive workers who only later began to experience job loss in the mid-2000s.

### *Casino Worker Wages: Mapping an 'Industrial Past' onto a 'Postindustrial Future'*

The casino was created with the intent to not only supply jobs to displaced auto workers but to offer *good* jobs. Windsor business, labour, and political leaders contended that these were to be well-paying and stable jobs, supplanting what automotive workers had lost. Despite the casino not employing auto workers, some Windsor stakeholders and workers expected that the casino would still provide "auto wages." I examined whether wages at Casino Windsor would reflect what Windsor stakeholders saw as Windsor's fast approaching *industrial past* being brought into Windsor's anticipated *postindustrial future*. My findings challenge previous scholarship which suggest that casino workers represent the 'new economy' of service work, whereby workers simply embrace the ideology of the market through their entrepreneurship and individualism (Mutari and Figart 2015; Sallaz 2002; Taft 2016). I evince how larger political and institutional forces ensured Casino Windsor workers would leave the "industrial mindset" in the past and adopt a market-oriented understanding of their labour.

During the initial years of Casino Windsor, there was a struggle over whether casino workers were entitled to "auto wages." The CAW, having long organized auto workers, maintained the view that these workers similarly would be entitled to a portion of the surplus they created for their employer. Casino Windsor workers initially aligned with the union's position. The provincial government, concerned that such a precedent would then be set across future Ontario casinos (and potentially across the broader service sector), worked to quash this mentality. Casino Windsor workers now embrace a market-oriented mentality concerning their wage entitlements.

Casino Windsor workers now espouse the notion that they produce an *experience*—not a *product*—and view their low human capital as reason enough to be “grateful” for their wage. After the strike which transpired during the negotiation of the first collective bargaining agreement (1995), the CAW leadership withdrew its initial rhetoric and accepted that wages at Casino Windsor should be compared to other service and hospitality occupations. Since then, CAW Local 444 has taken on and been stuck with a market-oriented model of wage determination. CAW leadership encouraged their casino members to compare themselves to other service and hospitality occupations, which meant casino workers only had non-unionized and/or low-wage occupations (i.e., low sectoral union density in service and hospitality) to compare their wages. The opportunity for Casino Windsor to represent an alternative to what ‘postindustrial work’ means, materially and ideologically (i.e., decommodified understanding of labour) for low-skilled workers was lost. Windsor stakeholders and casino workers continue to view Casino Windsor as contributing to the “public good” as they accept the seemingly natural connection between casino work, the service sector, and commodified wages.

#### *A Postindustrial Reality: ‘Good’ Jobs and ‘Good’ Workers*

While Casino Windsor workers would not receive “auto wages,” the casino did, however, offer an opportunity for workers already in the low-wage, low-skilled service sector. This predominately female workforce, due to employment at a unionized casino, is being paid more than they would elsewhere in the low-skilled service sector. These workers are arguably better off than if the casino had not come at all. Nonetheless, the ‘good jobs’ casino workers once saw themselves as having have become increasingly precarious. Casino Windsor sits near an international border in a region with a very competitive casino gaming market (i.e., four casinos within six miles of one another, three of which are in downtown Detroit). Effectively, Casino Windsor workers constitute a captive labour market where their employer, Casino Windsor, capitalizes on its status as ‘the company’ in the service sector in an economically depressed city. In contrast to previous research which suggests that casino workers can cope with the precarity in the industry by utilizing their mobility, these findings suggest that casino workers outside of ‘core’ gambling locations may be immobile (Mutari and Figart 2015; Sallaz 2002; Taft 2016).

At Casino Windsor, workers allege that the existence of their employer (and their income) is dependent on their provision of quality customer service. Workers, through providing

“good service,” cope with precarity and try to hang on to what they have. Casino workers claim that they are the ones who keep the casino running and competitive. Worker discontent is the result of Casino Windsor management betraying the casino workers expectations and prior experiences of job quality. Moreover, stemming from the transformation of work quality over time, Casino Windsor workers do adopt an oppositional stance in stating that they—not management—matter (Gallie 1978; Vallas 1987). Through this stance, workers not only reclaim a sense of agency and worth but also oppose management. When speaking about declining conditions and management’s disrespect, workers turn to the little value management offers while emphasizing their quality service and thus value. Indeed, workers are not the ones lacking in value. From here, it can be surmised that these workers would see themselves as responsible for the profits generated by Casino Windsor. Nonetheless, as explained in Chapter 4, larger political and institutional forces actively shaped these workers’ views of their wage entitlements, ensuring a market-oriented perspective.

The future of job quality at Casino Windsor does not look bright. Casino Windsor has undoubtedly equaled a large employer in the city of Windsor; yet, the local economy in which this employer exists and the sort of ‘diversification’ the casino represents has resulted in the union losing much of its bargaining power, placing workers in an increasingly precarious position. With increasing casino gaming competition across an international border, Casino Windsor workers have seen their wages stagnate and their tips and working conditions decline. In addition, the union has continually lost leverage in collective bargaining due to the captive status of their membership. The experiences of Casino Windsor workers enrich understandings of the employment effects of casinos. The casino firm exploits its monopoly in the area’s labour market as workers continue to provide ‘good service’ despite job quality plummeting and management disrespect. As Casino Windsor workers have been rendered immobile and with increasing job precarity, Casino Windsor jobs moved from ‘good’ to ‘not so good.’

#### *From Industrial to Deindustrial to Postindustrial?*

Has Casino Windsor made good on its promises of contributing to the “public good”? Looking over the past three decades, from Windsor acquiring (1988-1994) to hosting (1994-2015) a casino, the answer to whether casinos contribute to the “public good” is not a simple yes or no. By offering a long-term view of casino development—instead of an (early) ‘snapshot’—I

discover that Casino Windsor has only fulfilled part of this promise. Heather, a Casino Windsor worker, articulates this unfulfilled promise, declaring:

I think it, well it was supposed to be this thing that was going to save the city. But I don't think it did, I think it was an unrealized expectation. Like unfulfilled promises. [...] I don't think it was the, um, magic pill that fixed the problem, you know what I mean? People are always looking for a quick fix. [...] There's a lot of, I don't know ... hopelessness. A lot frustration with the workers about losing their full-time jobs [...] it was supposed to turn the economy around, it was supposed to bring people in droves, and they were going to spend money downtown...

Overall, economists maintain that casinos 'do' result in an increase in the "public good" for host communities through: a) increased revenues, b) economic diversification, and c) employment. In contrast, scholars—principally anchored in urban geography, sociology, and political science—have argued that the benefits are not so 'good' for all. Following this latter contingent of scholars, my interests lie in how the 'good' (and the 'bad') of casinos come to be. In the study of Casino Windsor, this meant unpacking its history to see where power is and how the distribution of the "public good" becomes unequal. In doing so, I shed new light on the power struggles of casino development between interest groups and how these struggles are shaped by political and economic forces. These are the processes which determine *who got what* when a casino is brought into a community as a (re)development tool in a city heavily dependent on a single industry and experiencing economic decline. My findings further highlight the non-linear character of deindustrialization and how this affects whether and how the promises of the 'good' are met. In a fundamental sense, this thesis points to how the broader political and economic landscape matters in revitalizing deindustrializing cities.

The casino has undoubtedly created revenue for the municipality—thus affirming economists' contentions of revenue generation. Yet, the returns to the city proved minimal relative to initial Casino Windsor expectations. Indeed, like scholars critical of the 'good' casinos bring to host communities, we see that Windsor was *dealt out* of many of the anticipated monetary benefits of hosting a casino. The Ontario provincial government used its power to grant gaming licenses to communities as leverage over economically desperate Windsor. The Ontario government's control over who is awarded these licenses ensured that the sort of casino Windsor would receive prioritized provincial revenue generating interests over municipally-defined interests in revenue, diversification, and employment.

The casino has also diversified the economy in the sense that it created another large employer outside of the automotive industry, yet again upholding economists' assertions. However, the sort of diversification the casino has taken on is the form of a "one-stop shop" for consumers. Local Windsor business interests view this as taking away patronage from smaller service and hospitality businesses. This contrasts with the small Monte Carlo-style casino attached to a larger recreation and entertainment development initially proposed by Windsor stakeholders. Indeed, the casino has arguably reduced competition in the service sector in the area as it has pushed out other smaller, locally owned businesses, who, unlike the casino, are not subsidized by the provincial government.

Did Casino Windsor offer 'good jobs'? Depending on the timeframe under consideration, the answer is yes and no. First, the good casino jobs were not provided for those they were intended to. While part of this expected 'good' was that the casino would bring good jobs to the community and would act as a stopgap for the loss of manufacturing, this did not occur. In fact, instead of functioning to transition workers from manufacturing to service, it concentrated service workers from diverse service jobs into the casino. When auto workers could have used casino jobs beginning in the mid-2000s, the casino also began to experience a more permanent bust and did not function to provide employment for out of work auto workers.

Moreover, "auto wages" never materialized. In the automotive union town of Windsor, Casino Windsor contributing to the "public good" equaled the casino offering "auto wages" (read: high paid relative to skillset and a worker entitlement to a share of surplus). Indeed, the historical and contemporary reliance of Windsor on the CAW unionized auto industry created a longstanding mentality about the definition of a 'good job.' Yet, the CAW failed to bring an "industrial" (read: decommodified) understanding of labour into Casino Windsor. Instead, a commodified ideology of labour permeates the union leadership and casino membership. While the casino may not have represented a postindustrial shift in the area's labour market, it did represent a market-oriented shift in the ideology of the CAW, one of Canada's most militant private sector unions. As a result of this shift in ideology, the CAW and its casino membership tolerate less. Arguably, the CAW was unable to realize the 'good' for casino workers.

The casino did, however, provide an opportunity and, from a crude financial perspective, these workers are arguably better off than if the casino never came at all. However, these workers are now experiencing precarity and immobility in a company town where the casino

gaming market is heavily competitive and, arguably, saturated. It also seems that the casino has consolidated and monopolized gaming and entertainment within the Windsor area whereby the employer enjoys a monopoly over the labour market. These processes have worked to increase the precarity of Casino Windsor workers and job quality has moved from ‘good’ to ‘not so good.’ While casinos are increasingly used as job generators in areas lacking employment options, policymakers and researchers alike must consider the likelihood and implications of casinos creating and existing in company towns. This is especially true if such state-sponsored strategies are to make good on their promise of creating ‘good jobs’ in an increasingly competitive casino market.

Windsor’s entrance into the casino industry, guided by the ‘benevolent hand’ of the government, is seemingly set on a path to repeat Windsor’s economic history (i.e., the automotive industry) of worker immobility and precarity as a result of over reliance on a large employer. Casinos are being placed in areas where workers lack leverage (i.e., low-skills and high unemployment rates) due to an overreliance on a single industry. This economic diversification tool has, to put it paradoxically, created further overdependence for a community which is still grappling with the consequences of auto manufacturing dependence. Indeed, despite the initial expectation that a casino would fuel more diversification, Casino Windsor has worked to continue and expand this community’s legacy of primary dependence to a casino.

The short-sightedness of heavy dependence on a casino has quickly come to fruition—mirrored in sharp revenue decline—as competition between four casinos (three of which line the Detroit side of the Detroit River) has intensified the interlocal competition for localized dollars. Nonetheless, the case of Casino Windsor, in Windsor, Ontario, does possess some unique elements—such as its existence on an international border and its 20<sup>th</sup> century legacy as a one-industry town (i.e., auto). It would be of interest to understand how the “public good” becomes distributed in cities/host communities that have more leverage (i.e., healthier/diversified economy) to negotiate their interests (i.e., revenue generation and economic diversification) and where workers/unions have more power/leverage (i.e., lower unemployment, no international border) to pursue their interests (i.e., decommodification). Under these circumstances, host communities may accrue more of the “public good” from casino development.

Also, Casino Windsor does not represent a casino in a completely deindustrialized setting; instead, Windsor represents a liminal space between industrial (auto) and postindustrial (casino).

It would also be of interest to understand whether and how casinos contribute to the “public good” in a thoroughly deindustrialized setting. An interesting case to further understand the political and economic forces impacting the power struggles which determine how much casinos contribute to the “public good” of a host community is the case of Detroit. Detroit constructed three casinos in the late 1990s, well after the decimation of automotive manufacturing and, arguably, the city. Compared to Windsor, the economic desperation of Detroit was more extreme, yet the number of casinos adopted would likely provide mobility/leverage for these casino workers—who are unionized by the Detroit Casino Council, which includes UAW Local 7777, Unite Here Local 24, Teamsters Local 372, and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 324. Indeed, how does the extent of deindustrialization and scope of casino development (i.e., three vs. one) matter in how casinos contribute to the “public good”?

Overall, while casinos continue to be sold to communities experiencing economic decline, this dissertation problematizes the idea that casinos are a ready answer. Windsor is an auto town that has become, in effect, a two-company town. Windsor’s economic trajectory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—in terms of dependence on a single large employer and worker precarity—does not seem so very different than what Windsor experienced during the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the automotive industry. Arguably, the precarity which casino workers experience is more extreme, as Casino Windsor competes with three resort casinos in Detroit for localized dollars, in comparison to the national/international orientation of the automotive industry. Indeed, from *cars* to *cars and a casino* has equaled a growing reliance on an industry with just as much (or more) of a precarious future. The ready alternatives remain elusive, however, for communities which were once or continue to be heavily dependent on low-skilled manufacturing work.

## **Appendix A**

### **Windsor stakeholders:**

1. Albert: City council member
2. Alex: Windsor Chamber of Commerce representative
3. Barry: Windsor media representative
4. Bill: Windsor realty representative
5. Calvin: Former Windsor Liberal political representative
6. Christian: Windsor gaming representative
7. Denis: Windsor labour leader
8. Dominik: City council executive official
9. Ellen: City council executive official
10. Evan: Police services official
11. Jeff: Windsor tourism representative
12. Jim: Windsor NDP political representative
13. John: Former Windsor NDP political representative
14. Ken: Casino Windsor executive
15. Kevin: City Council Executive official
16. Melanie: Windsor Problem Gambling representative
17. Mike: Former Windsor labour leader
18. Susan: Windsor small business representative
19. Tom: Windsor labour leader
20. Trish: Windsor workforce services representative

### **Automotive assembly workers and year hired:**

1. Aaron: 2000
2. Adam: 1993
3. Alex: 1994
4. Anne: 1993
5. Bill: 2011
6. Bob: 1974
7. Chad: 2009
8. Cheryl: 1994
9. Chuck: 1994
10. Curtis: 2011
11. Dale: 1993
12. Dave: 1995
13. Dino: 1994
14. Dom: 1991



15. Drew: 1995
16. Earl: 1993
17. Edgar: 1994
18. Eli: 1993
19. Frank: 1994
20. Fred: 1986
21. Gabe: 1983
22. Jessica: 1994
23. Joseph: 1993
24. Joe: 2000
25. John: 1994
26. Katherine: 1996
27. Kevin: 1995
28. Linda: 1993
29. Lou: 1995
30. Louis: 1978
31. Matt: 1997
32. Nina: 1995
33. Pat: 1983
34. Ralph: 1994
35. Rodger: 1995
36. Samantha: 1994
37. Steven: 1994
38. Sue: 1994
39. Tim: 1983
40. Tony: 1993
41. Vernon: 1994
42. Victor: 1984
43. Walt: 1994

**Casino Windsor workers and year hired:**

1. Anne: 1995
2. Betty: 1995
3. Catherine: 1995
4. Chris: 1995
5. Dan: 1995
6. Diane: 1994
7. Denise: 1995
8. Devin: 1994
9. Hank: 1994

10. Heather: 1994
11. Isabelle: 1998
12. Jeff: 1998
13. Jessica: 1994
14. Jim: 2004
15. Jill: 1999
16. Karen: 1995
17. Karl: 1998
18. Kate: 1998
19. Lucy: 1998
20. Margaret: 1995
21. Matt: 1996
22. Mike: 1994
23. Patty: 1995
24. Rick: 1995
25. Ryan: 1999
26. Samantha: 1998
27. Sandra: 1995
28. Sara: 1995

## Appendix B

### *Main Interview Guide for Windsor Stakeholders*

#### **Caesars Windsor:**

Please tell me what you think Caesars Windsor means/represents for ...

Windsor?

Workers?

Windsor's economy?

For the people/households?

People outside of Windsor?

Province?

Country?

Why NDP?

Why, in your mind, was Windsor first to be chosen to host?

Why, in your mind, was the casino built?

What were your thoughts when it was being built?

How do you think the casino has affected Windsor?

Where does the money Caesars Windsor make go?

What is done with it?

Who benefits from the casino?

Is the money being directed back to the community?

If so, where?

What would, in your mind, have happened if the casino was never built?

What would happen, in your mind, if the casino left?

What, in your mind, is Caesars Windsor's future in Windsor?

Who would you say tends to visit the casino?

What sort of relationship does Caesars Windsor have with the Detroit casinos?

What impact has the Detroit casinos had on Caesars Windsor/viability?

How do you think people's lives have changed in the community since the opening of Caesars?

What is the municipalities relationship to the casino?

What do you think about the design/appearance of the building?

*Interview Guide for Casino and Automotive Workers*

Demographics

Please tell me about yourself ...

What are some of the things that define you and your life?

Age?

Class?

Religion?

How religious? Frequent services?

Where were you born?

Ethnicity?

Grow up in Windsor?

Where do you currently live?

How many years of schooling?

Where did you go to school?

Certifications/licenses completed?

Marital Status?

How long?

Children?

If children, do they still live with?

How often do you see household member(s)?

Please tell me about your job...

What is your job?

How long?

What do you do there?

Are you hourly or salaried?

How much?

If you work shiftwork, which shift do you tend to work?

Benefit package?

What are the particular responsibilities of your job?

How many hours do you tend to work a week?

How do you feel about your job?

Your pay?

What brought you to work here?

Where did you work before?

How long?

How did you feel about this job?

Relative to your current?

What provincial/federal political party would you align yourself with?

Time

Please tell me about how you spend your time on an average weekday...

On an average weekday, how much time do you spend...

At work?  
Cleaning the house?  
Cooking?  
Caring for family member(s)?  
Shopping for the household?  
Relaxing at home?  
Sleeping?  
How do you relax?  
How do you have fun?

### Income

Please tell me about the current financial environment of the household...

Estimated annual income?  
Household versus individual?  
How do you feel about your income?  
Who makes the budget in the household?  
    Who would you say is/are the spender(s) in the household?  
        Why would you characterize X in this way?  
    Who would you say is/are the saver(s) in the household?  
        Why would you characterize X in this way?  
Pool money? Separate account?  
What would you say are your households saving habits?  
How does this relate to your plans for retirement?

## **The Casino**

### General

Please tell about the sort of relationship you have with the casino...  
What sort of relationship do you think Windsor households have with the casino on average?  
  
Have you ever been negatively affected by someone else visiting the casino?  
Gambling?

### Impact on Household Relations

Please tell me how you think the casino affects households in Windsor...  
The workers?  
Those who gamble?

### Impact on Financial Resources

Please tell me how you think the casino affects household's in Windsor finances...  
The workers?

Those who gamble?

### Impact on Temporal Resources

Please tell me how you think the casino affects the time people spend in their households in Windsor ...

Or doing things for the household? (i.e. cleaning, cooking, caring, shopping)

The workers?

Those who gamble?

### **Views on Caesars Windsor:**

Please tell me what you think Caesars Windsor means/represents for ...

Windsor?

Workers?

Windsor's economy?

For the people/households?

People outside of Windsor

Province?

To you?

Why, in your mind, was Windsor first to be chosen to host?

Why, in your mind, was the casino built?

What were your thoughts when it was being built?

How do you think the casino has affected Windsor?

Households?

Your life?

Where does the money Caesars Windsor make go?

What is done with it?

Who benefits from the casino?

Is the money being directed back to the community?

If so, where?

What would, in your mind, have happened if the casino was never built?

What would happen, in your mind, if the casino left?

What, in your mind, is Caesars Windsor's future in Windsor?

Who would you say tends to visit the casino?

How do you think people's lives have changed in the community since the opening of Caesars?

What would say to people that say that casinos are a regressive tax on the poor?

Do you know anyone who works at the casino? Who goes there?

Would you say that the municipality has control over the happenings of the casino?

Which type of people tend to be problem gamblers? How does this happen?

What do you think about the design/appearance of the building?

Do you think the presence of Caesars Windsor has impacted men and women differently?

## Appendix C

### Educational Attainment of Casino and Automotive Workers

Education level – Degree Completed	No-high school	High-school	College/trade	University-undergraduate	Master's
Auto workers	2	27	8	5	1
Casino Workers	2	16	8	2	0

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