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Gov. Rendell has finally come around to the idea that Philadelphia may not need a second casino, now that the gaming license for Foxwoods has been pulled. That's quite a parting gift from the lame duck.

With Rendell

practically out the door, it will be up to Mayor Nutter to convince state officials that this region is already saturated with casinos and the inevitable social pathologies linked to them.

Pennsylvania gambling regulators' Dec. 16 decision to revoke the license for the long-delayed Foxwoods project gave city and state officials a rare opportunity to rethink the advisability of a second city casino. It makes more sense to move the license from Foxwoods' bad location on the Delaware River, or even to scrap it.

If Nutter needed any more convincing that the city should cut its losses after the Foxwoods project, which he once called "wrong for Philadelphia," then Rendell's concession Monday should do the trick. Rendell said it was a "fair question" whether three area casinos and a planned resort gaming hall in Valley Forge were enough.

It speaks volumes that Rendell, the biggest cheerleader for casinos and their likely short-term economic returns, would be willing to admit the possibility that - in terms of the Philadelphia-area market - even one more casino just might be too many.

There are plenty of signs that indicate that would be the case. The overall fiscal realities facing casino operators in a down economy are being felt across the nation, especially in Atlantic City.

In this region, the addition of the SugarHouse Casino on North Delaware Avenue - the state's 10th casino - may have revealed the first signs of weakness in the state's otherwise robust growth in gambling revenues. SugarHouse's take so far is well short of what the house pulls in at both Parx Casino in Bucks County and Harrah's Chester in that city.

By the same token, Foxwoods' trouble in getting financing for its project on the Delaware River, at the foot of Reed Street, was another likely indication that Wall Street bankers have doubts about the city's casino market.

As for the social ills associated with gambling, they've already begun to materialize. Gamblers have left children in parked cars outside Parx. A SugarHouse patron was struck in the head by an armed robber, while another was followed to his South Jersey home by would-be thieves.

In their last-minute push to save their license, Foxwoods officials played up the fear that the city might lose the license to another Pennsylvania community. But that could be a blessing in disguise. For instance, casino employees and suppliers in the region who look to gaming for their livelihoods might find that moving the Foxwoods license to a more viable location would provide them with more job security.

Unfortunately, the Nutter administration has budgeted nearly \$14 million a year in taxes from a second casino. The long-term economic and social costs of gambling likely would outweigh such short-term gains. So it was disappointing to hear a Nutter spokesman's rather nebulous statement this week on whether the second casino license should be moved.

It would be better for a reform-minded mayor seeking a second term to just say "no" to locating another casino in the city.

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