

Border blunder costs gambler \$20000 in casino winnings - Montreal Gazette

Written by Administrator
Saturday, 06 November 2010 16:10 -

WINDSOR, Ont. - A Caesars Windsor gambler lost \$20,000 to the U.S. government after border guards called his bluff.

After a man from Birmingham, Mich., won \$40,000 at Caesars Monday, he put half in deposit at the casino and tried to bring almost \$20,000 back to Michigan without declaring it, according to U.S. officials.

"He gave some to his friend so he wouldn't have to fill

out the reporting form," said Chief Ronald Smith of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. "During the course of our interview with the individuals and verifying their currency, the truth came out and we seized the entire \$19,901 as a penalty for the offence.

"If he'd showed up at the border and said I've got \$20,000 with me, we would have counted it, filled out the form and he would have been on his way home with his money."

If you're carrying \$10,000 while crossing the border, Smith said you are required to declare it and fill out a form.

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Instead of doing that, the man gave some of the cash to his friend and told him to declare it as his own. The men told the U.S. border guard they'd each won roughly \$9,500. The guard sent the 30- and 31-year-old men to secondary inspection.

"If somebody says they're really close to that amount, we'll go ahead and verify their cash just to make sure," Smith said.

"Sometimes people make a mistake when they're counting their cash. And in this case we had two individuals who went to the cash and both won about the same amount of money. It's a little unusual."

He didn't know why the man tried to avoid declaring the cash, but added people do it all the time.

"People don't want to tell us because they think we're going to tell the IRS, or they don't want to tell us because they don't want their significant other to find out or their ex to find out," Smith said. "People have just a myriad of reasons why they don't declare their cash, or under-declare it. In this case it was the structuring of the currency in order to avoid the declaration that really got him."

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At secondary inspection, the passenger got nervous.

"He let us know it wasn't his money that he was carrying," Smith said. "He was carrying some of the other guy's money, which put the driver over the \$10,000 threshold. They had structured the money in an attempt to avoid declaring it, which is a violation of the rules."

Smith said the gambler can appeal the customs seizure.

"He stands a really good chance of getting most of his money back," Smith said. "It won't be all of it because there will be a penalty involved."

He didn't know what game the man was playing when he won the cash.

"Whatever it was, I'd like to know his secret," Smith said. "That's a good catch right there."

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Failing to declare the cash isn't a criminal offence, so the man's name hasn't been released.

For Canadian gamblers or others crossing the border with a lot of cash, the rules at the border are similar. There is no restriction on the amount of money you can bring to or take out of Canada, but you must report amounts of \$10,000 or more. That includes cash, coins, bank notes and securities such as travellers cheques, stocks and bonds.

Not declaring the amount that is \$10,000 or more means the money could be seized and you could face penalties ranging from \$250 to \$5,000 or forfeiture.

twilhelm@windsorstar.com

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