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For Immediate Release

**VANCOUVER COMMUNITY & BUSINESS LEADERS
FORM CITIZEN GROUP TO OPPOSE LA CENTER CASINO LOCATION**

A group of prominent Clark County citizens has formed a committee to urge the relocation of a proposed Cowlitz Indian reservation/casino along Interstate 5 at the La Center interchange in Clark County. The committee is led by longtime Vancouver businessman and civic leader, Edward Lynch, who will serve as chair.

Addressing a news conference at the new Hilton Vancouver Convention Center this morning, Lynch said the group is called, "***Citizens against Reservation Shopping***" (***CARS***), a name based on the recently popular tribal practice of choosing an ideal location for a casino, then working to have that location given reservation status. Lynch said, "Reservation shopping redefines the term 'sacred ground' to mean 'any land near an interstate highway with an interchange close to a metropolitan center.'"

Today, Lynch released the names of those joining him on the CARS steering group. They include:

- Scott Campbell, Publisher, The Columbian
- Dave Christensen, Chairman, Christensen Shipyard LTD
- Paul Christensen, President, Realvest Corporation
- Bill Fromhold, State Representative, 49th District
- Kent Landerholm, President, Landerholm and Associates
- Craig Pridemore, State Senator, 49th District and former Clark County Commissioner
- Newt Rumble, CPA, Peterson and Associates
- Pat Scheaffer, President and CEO, Riverview Community Bank
- Judie Stanton, Owner, J.S. Webworks and former Clark County Commissioner

The organization is in a formative stage and additional membership will be announced shortly, Lynch told the media.

The Cowlitz Tribe has applied with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs to make a 152-acre site near La Center its initial reservation in order to build and operate a giant casino complex that would be the fifth largest in the U.S., near in size to the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Since filing its application, the Cowlitz Tribe has formed a partnership with the Mohegan Indian Tribe, owners of the Mohegan Sun Casino in Connecticut.

“It’s time for some straight talk about the hardships such a casino would visit on the people and communities of our county,” said Lynch. “All we’ve heard so far is ‘public relations’ about new jobs, tourism and what a good neighbor the Tribe will be. There’s another very sinister side to this story, including the fallout from problem -gambling as well as troubling community and socio-economic impacts. We mean to talk about it, and we’re not going to stop talking until the job is done.”

“We all agree,” stated Lynch, “the Cowlitz Tribe has a right to provide economic opportunity for its membership. But it would have a far better justification in locating a reservation and casino nearer its ancestral villages to the north, such as Toledo.” Presently, the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) requires a cultural and historic connection to the land in order to achieve casino rights, a connection the Cowlitz cannot make in Clark County, according to Lynch.

“In the 1800’s, travel from their villages in what are now Cowlitz and Lewis Counties, to Fort Vancouver, was a journey of several days and meant risking hostile encounters with other bands of Indians”, he said. “The region which became Clark County was inhabited by the Chinook and Klickitat Tribes. They spoke different languages. There were no bands of Cowlitz living here, no tribal government of any kind. The Cowlitz’ claim to the La Center site is simply without merit.”

Reservation shopping is drawing fire from many states across the nation, all of which are experiencing tribes, some from other states, laying claim to non-reservation lands the tribes want taken into trust for casino gambling under the IGRA. Legislation to halt the practice has been drafted and is under consideration in the U.S. House of Representatives, where Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) has called on the President to declare a two-year moratorium on opening any more casinos until the IGRA can be reviewed by Congress.

“This is not a Republican or a Democrat issue; nor is it a conservative or a liberal issue,” Wolf wrote the President on May 19. “It is a matter that calls for action in the best interest of every American. Casino gambling, once limited to places like Las Vegas and Atlantic City, is now coming to cities—and even small towns—across America and bringing with it all its social ills, like higher crime and suicide rates, increased personal bankruptcies and the breakup of families.”

Lynch said CARS wants to increase the level of awareness in Clark County about impacts a casino of this size (160,000 square feet) would have on transportation, particularly the I-5 corridor, schools, the nearby wildlife refuge, housing, jobs, crime, drugs, suicides, divorce and more. “Over the next several months”, Lynch said, “our group is prepared to use all of the communication devices at our disposal. Before the BIA makes its decision, we want the agency to hear our collective voice in opposition to what we believe is a disaster in the making.”

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