
Canada's Gambling Watch Network's e-mailed Newsletter

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We are not alone in our struggle against the continuing expansion of gambling in Canada. Going to <http://www.citizenvoice.ca> will give you more information on this group, while Game Planit reveals the truth about slots and other Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs). See how deceptive the machines can be from virtual reels to concealed odds. All things in the EGMs are designed to addict the player. Visit <http://www.gameplanit.com> for more.

Anyone who wants to join the class-action suit against Loto-Québec, or wanting to know more on that issue, will find a link on website www.vivaconsulting.com pointing the way.

Also: a group of activists in Nova Scotia established the Web site [gameovervlt.com](http://www.gameovervlt.com), it has many stories that show what pathological gambling does to individuals and their families.

Our Blueprint for action to reform Canadian gambling law, policies & practices into real public interest will be e-mailed to anyone who asks for it.

We're always open to Guest Editorials and Letters to the Editor. Placing an item doesn't mean that we agree with the opinion expressed. As a coalition of a variety of groups and people, our "party line" leaves room for differences of opinion, and we welcome them!

Help!

Due to the closing of our former Internet server, our Web site is presently inaccessible. Its contents are a part of our extensive archives, so it can be rebuilt. We are badly in need of a **volunteer Web Master or Mistress** with the ability and the willingness to do this.

We are always looking for persons who have the time, the interest and the ability to help us finding news articles about gambling from coast to coast. We are doing our best to be a Canada-wide organization, but the fact that many newspapers (especially in Atlantic Canada!) restrict access to their site to subscribers makes it necessary to find activists in all provinces to make sure that items of importance are not missed. All that our activists need is a computer and access to the Internet. Do not be afraid of your own inexperience: in the 7 years of our existence, we have more than once helped new people to get started!

We should add here that Canada's Gambling Watch Network also needs financial help. For some seven years our expenses have been paid mainly from the pockets of generous activists, and a few years ago we began to try to get regular supporters. We will continue to look for subscribers to our Newsletter. The minimum membership is \$10 per year, the regular is \$20 annually, and any bigger amounts will be received with thanks. We cannot issue receipts that will be recognized by Canada's taxation system. How can we actively oppose gambling without being politically active? Send cheque or money order, payable to Canada's Gambling Watch Network, to our Treasurer, Art Tiesma, 308 Spruce Street, London, ON, N5W 4N5.

Guest Editorial by Roger Horbay - The Real Cheating Must Be Stopped

Over the past few weeks the CBC and The Fifth Estate have revealed lottery retailers may be involved in lottery ticket fraud and how the Ontario Lottery & Gaming (OLG)

badly treats those who complain. This has resulted in Ontario's Ombudsman rightfully launching an investigation into the lack of trust for the OLG.

I've written to the Ontario Ombudsman to ask him to expand his investigations to include gambling issues we have all been concerned about over the years, and to investigate OLG's practice of not abiding by the Ontario Consumer Protection Act, the Criminal Code of Canada and the Competition Act. We'll provide you this letter upon request. It covers concerns such as:

- Too many retailers winning the lotteries might be an indicator of a much more serious breach in security of the electronic lottery systems – have they been compromised?
- OLG lets retailers continue to sell instant scratch tickets after the top prizes have been won even though there is absolutely no chance of winning the jackpot - players are misled to believe they can win a jackpot when it's impossible.
- OLG routinely pulls batches of instant scratch games (game lots) when they please, even if no one has won the jackpots.
- Progressive slot machine "jackpots" are reset during "regular maintenance". Where does the accumulated jackpot pool money go that 1000s of players paid into trying to hit the jackpot? The jackpot money also disappears when these progressives are "retired".
- **OLG refuses to disclose the identity of slot machine jackpot winners even though there have been persistent rumors for years that cheating teams are consistently winning these jackpots and that OLG is using secret “bonusing systems” that can target jackpots to specific players and machines. This lack of integrity is unacceptable.**
- OLG conceals the odds of winning specific prizes on Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs), while using “unbalanced reels”, “virtual reel mapping” and “non-linear paytables” (that change the players' odds of winning depending on amount wagered). All these concealed processes and features distort players' perceptions and give players a false impression of favourable odds, multiple near misses and that a win is imminent. All of which can be called *unconscionable representations* and deceptive trade practices.
- The use of “private operators” to conduct and manage casinos, sell lottery and Nevada tickets, in light of a legal opinion the government received in 1996 that describes this practice as a “scheme calculated to circumvent provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada”.

All these concerns have been raised over the past several years with the Ontario government, the OLG and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO), who regulate casinos and slot machines, but not lottery games. For some unknown reason, OLG regulates lottery games itself? All our complaints, even to the Ontario Provincial Police, have fallen on deaf ears, indifference and inaction.

If the private sector behaved this way and sold such products to consumers with total disregard for the laws that protect consumers, the Attorney Generals would shut them down and call their operations a scam.

I believe that in order to restore real trust in the OLG there needs to be a full and open public inquiry into the OLG and all their operations and practices and to ascertain why the OLG doesn't abide by all laws and why the AGCO hasn't insisted the OLG abide by all laws.

It's time to stop the real cheating and openly investigate all OLG products and practices. If you share our concerns, please contact the Special Ombudsman Response

Team by phone at 1-866-623-7678, or E-mail: info@ombudsman.on.ca .

Roger Horbay

(Roger is President of Game Planit and a Gaming Technology Consultant to Canada's Gambling Watch Network. Reach him at 519.846.1905 or rogerh@gameplanit.com

Gambling and Crime

'Online betting, cocaine worth millions to crime ring' is the heading of a CBC 11/23 item reporting that 73 people were arrested, that the crime ring involved has connections with Mafia and that the illegal online sport betting operations' servers are in the Caribbean and on the Kahnawake Mohawk reserve, south of Montreal The next day's Toronto Star says that the Toronto area is involved in this affair.

The 11/24 National Post reports that the police laid 130 charges after some Toronto poker players were robbed and a high-speed pursuit took place.

British Columbia

'Mission council paves way for 50 slot machines', an item in the 11/24 Abbotsford Times that's also found in the 11/25 Vancouver Sun, reports that this decision was six to zero. A councillor claimed that "there is no evidence that slot machines in this type of enterprise cause an increase in crime or in addictive behaviour" despite the fact that the 11/14 Times Colonist in its 'gambling binge brings crime wave' article included "community gaming centres" in the cause of that wave.

Two items in the 11/25 Times Colonist report that the horseracing people aren't ready to realize that their hobby is a dying one. They are making efforts to revive Sandown Park.

Alberta

In 'Gambling addiction off radar', columnist Mindelle Jacobs says that as eight candidates vie for the leadership of the Tory party, hardly a peep has been heard about the gambling issue, while problem gamblers are still ruining their lives and the lives of those who love them. That silence is the very thing we of Gambling Watch are trying to combat. Would it help to wake people up when we remind them of a story that really tells us what kinds of harm gambling causes? Here follows the link to what Andrew Nikiforuk wrote about a well-known Alberta person. Once you start reading it, you won't want to stop:

<http://www.walrusmagazine.com/u/register/?ref=society-albertas-gamble-with-gambling>

Or will a new scandal, revealed in a Toronto Star CP item, 'RCMP probes Alta executive'

accomplish that? Here's a line of that article: 'A fired executive with Alberta's addiction agency is under police investigation after the auditor general found he used false contracts to feed his gambling habit and lavish lifestyle'. One day later the Calgary Sun reports the same issue in its 'Massive scam revealed' item.

Manitoba

Manitoba's Addictions Awareness Week was mentioned in the 11/21 and 11/22 Winnipeg Sun, and both items drew some attention to gambling addiction. The 22 Sun reported that the province's government has agreed to give the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) \$20M in gaming revenue over five years to help improve their standard of living. Talk and negotiations to share lottery profits from all casinos and VLTs in the province with First Nations have been ongoing since 2003. Currently, First Nations keep profits from the two on-reserve casinos and 90% of VLT revenue from on-reserve sites. The 11/25 Sun writes that customers will decide if a native-owned

gaming lounge in Headingley respects the province's smoking ban, the chief of the Swan Lake First Nation declared. He said the majority of them have told him they hope the VLT lounge remains smoke-free.

In an article to which we have no access, the 11/23 Brandon Sun writes that the Manitoba Lottery Corporation finds no evidence of tampering.

Ontario

Gambling can be fun, but you may just end up losing more than you bargained for, a line in the 11/21 Sarnia Observer, is typical of the Ontario Responsible Gambling Council.

'Tourism numbers fall' is the title of an article in the 11/20 Niagara Falls Review.

'Local businesspeople confirm disturbing trend reported by Statistics Canada', is an item in its 11/21 issue on the same subject; 'Private sector role to build border bridge applauded' is an 11/24 item, and 'Pricey casino concert benefits David Foster charity' appears on 11/25.

'Casino revenue falls 33.8%', an 11/22 Windsor Star article, blames smoking restrictions and ongoing construction on this loss, and 'Lawyer defends track fees', an article of the same date, deals with an issue that goes back to 1997.

'Ticket sellers spend twice as much as most customers, which gives them a better chance of winning, Ontario's lottery chief said' is a line in the 11/22 Toronto Star; 'Stuffing your face' tells of Niagara's eating competition, and 'Disgusted by show of gluttony' a reaction to that show, appeared a day later.

During this week, the CBC and many newspapers reported on the lottery issues covered in our Guest Editorial.

Quebec

The 11/20 CBC News and the 11/21 Gazette report bar owners failed to have a section of Quebec's new anti-smoking law temporarily suspended. The association of Quebec bar owners will challenge the law's validity under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms at the Supreme Court of Canada in 2007.

The 11/25 Gazette reports a weekend strike of Loto-Quebec's lottery tickets division. For more Quebec news see Gambling and Crime section above.

Nova Scotia

The 11/21 Halifax Herald has the type of article that we've been waiting for. It's based on an item in the Canadian Medical Association Journal by Christiane Poulin, holder of the Canada Research Chair in population health and addictions, Dalhousie medical school.

She makes recommendations for stricter controls on gambling. They include:

- A complete ban on the advertising of gambling.
- Requiring retailers to keep lottery tickets out of sight behind the counter.
- Adoption of plain packaging for gambling products, with warning labels.
- More consistent enforcement of age restrictions for buying lottery tickets.
- A possible ban on instant-win tickets.
- A decrease in the number of video lottery terminals, or VLTs.
- A moratorium on new casinos.

If we had more space, we'd tell you more. We intend to get back to this next week. In the meantime, you may ask us to email you a 2-page pdf item: Poulin Editorial 1208.

'Paul Burrell is suing the province of Nova Scotia for negligence, claiming it's responsible for his gambling losses of \$500,000 over a three-year period at the Nova Scotia Casino', writes the 11/24 Cape Breton Post.

Prince Edward Island

The 11/25 Guardian writes: 'Card games like black jack and Texas hold 'em poker could soon be part of the Charlottetown Driving Park Entertainment Centre, moving the so-called racino one step closer to a full-fledged casino'.

Please contact us if you want more information on items in this letter or on their sources.