

Key Discursive Moments in the Trajectory of Canadian Gambling Public Policy

1816: “In Gambling you have run into the worst of sins ... A pernicious vice.”

1934 Aurthur Meighen: “Gambling is an attempt to get by chance what should earned by industry, to obtain the rewards of doing well by doing ill ... it attacks the twin pillars of civilization, the protestant work ethic and the ideal Bourgeois family.”

1945 J.R. Mutchmor: “Gambling is a form of stealing which turns youth away from all the basic factors in the free enterprise system. ... teaching people they can obtain something from nothing, is undermining the capitalistic system.”

1954 Anglican Church: “The desire to get something for nothing is a denial of honesty and industry.”

Questions

1. How do these discursive changes interact with public policy (is it the cause of changes, an effect, or something else)?

2. How does this change in discourse affect how problem gamblers think of themselves?

1957 Gamblers Anonymous: “Gambling is an emotional illness, because the need to gamble is uncontrollable ... it is a progressive illness which only can be arrested through total abstinence from gambling.”

1980 DSM-III: “A disorder of impulse control ... the individual is chronically and progressively unable to resist impulses to gamble.”

1998 Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse: “A loss of control with respect to gambling; a preoccupation with gambling; irrational thinking; and a continuation of the behaviour despite adverse consequences.”

2004 Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, and Shaffer: Reno Model: “The objective of Responsible Gambling is to prevent and reduce harm associated with excessive gambling behaviour in particular and should primarily target high risk gamblers.”

2014 Griffiths: Reno Model: “(1) decisions to gamble reside with the individual and represent a choice, and (2) in order to make good decisions, individuals need to be well informed.”

2020 AGLC: “Being responsible means providing policies, regulations, program tools and resources that educate Albertans on responsible gambling. We want every Albertan who gambles, to use their Game Sense.”

2020 GameSense: “Not everyone can gamble in a safe, responsible way ... they may have lost control of their gambling.”