



**PUBLIC POLICY
IMPLICATIONS OF
GAMBLING RESEARCH**

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

OBSERVATION: (Hana Gartner)

- Politicians & researchers are reluctant to speak about “larger societal issues” and “government responsibility” relative to gambling.
- The media interest in the impact of gambling will remain high.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

- **Citizen coalitions must continue to lobby politicians and court the media.**
- **Funding institutions (and researchers!) must disseminate findings from gambling studies.**

THEME #1 – RESEARCH, PUBLIC POLICY & THE PUBLIC INTEREST

OBSERVATION: (Rob Simpson)

- **Policy formulation is not a rationale process.**
- **Canadian gambling has unique attributes.**
- **4 Key research questions**
- **Need to retain research independence/integrity**

THEME #1 – RESEARCH, PUBLIC POLICY & THE PUBLIC INTEREST

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

- **Research funding institutions must develop “knowledge transfer strategies” to provide evidence to governments and the media**
- **Someone (Canadian public policy “think tanks”?) must become interested in leading the debate/analysis of gaming policy**

THEME #1 – RESEARCH, PUBLIC POLICY & THE PUBLIC INTEREST

OBSERVATION: (Roger Gibbins)

- **Canada West Foundation made a profound contribution to gambling studies in Canada, producing 16 study reports from 1998 to 2001**

THEME #1 – RESEARCH, PUBLIC POLICY & THE PUBLIC INTEREST

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

The public policy debate about gambling in Canada needs leadership!

THEME #1 – RESEARCH, PUBLIC POLICY & THE PUBLIC INTEREST

OBSERVATION: (Brian Yealland)

- **Canadian citizens have been largely voiceless in the government rush to expand gambling.**
- **The Canadian government owned/operated/regulated gambling model focuses on revenue generation and glosses over harm.**

THEME #1 – RESEARCH, PUBLIC POLICY & THE PUBLIC INTEREST

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

- **Communities and citizens must be formally engaged in government decisions related to gambling.**
- **The Canadian gambling model should be challenged and reconsidered.**

THEME #2 – LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO GAMBLING PUBLIC POLICY

OBSERVATION: (Peter Bowal)

- **The law should protect the gambler (consumer) from dangerous practices as it does in other transactional areas in Canadian society.**
- **There is no legislation in Alberta (and the rest of Canada?) that specifically protects the gambling consumer.**

THEME #2 – LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO GAMBLING PUBLIC POLICY

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

Research project is needed to (a) inventory the current Canadian consumer protection law that might apply to gamblers, and (b) develop pro forma statutory legislation that might be enacted.

THEME #2 – LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO GAMBLING PUBLIC POLICY

OBSERVATION: (Alex Pringle)

- **Problem gamblers who commit crimes are “sympathetic characters” vs. hardened criminals.**
- **Gambling addiction as a defense is typically not considered by the court, either at trial or during sentencing.**

THEME #2 – LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO GAMBLING PUBLIC POLICY

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

Research project is needed to develop a framework for the defense of a gambling addict charged with a crime.

THEME #3 – HOW VALUES INFLUENCE GAMBLING RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY

OBSERVATION: (Jennifer Borrell)

Gambling research is not value-free, as (a) research agendas are influenced by commercial imperatives, (b) study conclusions are sometimes downplayed, and (c) research designs are influenced by different paradigms (e.g., PG is an individual pathology)

THEME #3 – HOW VALUES INFLUENCE GAMBLING RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

Gambling researchers must be challenged to consider the “ethics” of their research approach, including (a) remaining faithful to the independence of the research endeavor, irrespective of who is funding the research, (b) letting the data speak for themselves when formulating conclusions, and (c) admitting to any biases that may influence their research.

THEME #2 – LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO GAMBLING PUBLIC POLICY

OBSERVATION: (Michael Lipton)

It may be possible for Canadian courts to exert jurisdiction over Internet gambling, but it is unlikely they will do so as (a) the law is unclear, and (b) prosecutorial zeal would be needed to pursue a case.

THEME #2 – LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO GAMBLING PUBLIC POLICY

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

Research project should inventory and monitor Internet laws in other jurisdictions, with a view to identifying “candidate laws” that may be appropriate for protecting Canadian Internet gambling interests.

THEME #3 – HOW VALUES INFLUENCE GAMBLING RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY

OBSERVATION: (Andrew Secker)

The New Zealand gambling regulatory model is unique in the world. The most salient elements are:

- People do not have a “right” to gamble.**
- Gambling is potentially harmful and therefore illegal unless permitted by the state.**
- Reverse onus on proponent to demonstrate how they are minimizing harm.**

THEME #3 – HOW VALUES INFLUENCE GAMBLING RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

Canadian provincial gambling providers and regulators should (a) be made aware of the New Zealand model, and (b) consider what elements might be incorporated into the Canadian model.

THEME #4 – JURISDICTIONAL ROLES IN GAMBLING POLICY

OBSERVATION: (Hal Pruden)

CCOC is a “very difficult read,” would be difficult to amend, and many people would like to have input into substantive changes and amendments.

THEME #4 – JURISDICTIONAL ROLES IN GAMBLING POLICY

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

A national debate on gambling in Canada should consider (a) the relative roles of the federal and provincial governments in provision/regulation of gambling, and (b) amendments to the CCOC that may be needed.

THEME #4 – JURISDICTIONAL ROLES IN GAMBLING POLICY

OBSERVATION: (Colin Campbell)

- In 1999, the US, UK and Australia conducted a national review of gambling.
- Should the CCOC be “decommissioned” with respect to enabling gambling, and should full legislative authority be devolved to the provinces.

THEME #4 – JURISDICTIONAL ROLES IN GAMBLING POLICY

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

There should be a “national study of gambling in Canada” and this should consider (a) the role of the federal and provincial governments in providing/regulating gambling, and (b) whether the CCOC is appropriate for facilitating gambling.

THEME #5 – RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING POLICY ISSUES

OBSERVATION: (Tony Schellinck)

- **The Reno model is basically flawed, as it has (a) some “troublesome” assumptions and biases, and (b) it may be a Trojan Horse for the gaming industry to “collaborate” with (co-opt) government providers/regulators.**
- **The Halifax model is an alternative that is broader in scope, with fewer troublesome assumptions and biases.**

THEME #5 – RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING POLICY ISSUES

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

- **The assumption should be challenged that there is a “need” for a framework to guide “responsible gambling initiatives, and more importantly, that governments and the gaming industry will utilize such a framework in developing RG initiatives.**
- **If there is merit in an RG framework, (a) various models should be considered, and (b) those charged with implementation of RG initiatives should be involved in developing the framework.**

THEME #5 – RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING POLICY ISSUES

OBSERVATION: (Kent Verlik)

AGLC has made a significant corporate decision to mount a “responsible gambling program.”

THEME #5 – RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING POLICY ISSUES

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

Most Canadian provincial government gambling providers/regulators now have a “responsible gambling division” and this office should be the “touchstone” for researchers, citizen coalitions and others interested in “changing” the gambling scene.

THEME #5 – RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING POLICY ISSUES

OBSERVATION: (Panel Discussion)

There is merit in developing a “framework” to guide responsible gambling initiatives, and it is possible and desirable to build on the Reno model.

THEME #5 – RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING POLICY ISSUES

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

The development of a “responsible gambling framework” that is broader than the Reno model should be pursued by the Alberta team and results should be shared widely.

THEME #6 – PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF GAMBLING RESEARCH PROGRAMS

OBSERVATION: (John McMullen)

Correlation between lower SES, spending on gambling, and prevalence of problem gambling (low income, elderly, and less educated households are most vulnerable).

THEME #6 – PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF GAMBLING RESEARCH PROGRAMS

IMPLICATION FOR ACTION:

A research agenda should be developed to examine gambling practices, motivations, and the impact of gambling on “vulnerable households” (i.e., low income families, the elderly, less educated).

THEME #6 – PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF GAMBLING RESEARCH PROGRAMS

OBSERVATION: (Rob Williams)

A disproportionate amount of gambling revenue world-wide comes from problem gamblers, particularly from EGMs.

THEME #6 – PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF GAMBLING RESEARCH PROGRAMS

IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION:

Gambling researchers need to increasingly use a “prospective diary” approach to gathering self-reported data on gambling activities, frequency/duration, and amount spent gambling.

THEME #6 – PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF GAMBLING RESEARCH PROGRAMS

OBSERVATION: (David Hodgins)

There are many problems associated with translating “scientific evidence” into practice, even when the results are very promising (e.g., Gambling Self Recovery Manual).

THEME #6 – PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF GAMBLING RESEARCH PROGRAMS

IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION:

Gambling research organizations and treatment researchers should (a) form a “strategic coalition” and a specific “project” to translate research findings into treatment practice, and (b) the 4 models of dissemination and Stirman’s tips should guide the strategy.