

Both sides of the coin

A strategy to prevent problem gambling and
support responsible gambling in Alberta

April 2009

Prepared by the joint Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) and
Alberta Health Services–Addiction and Mental Health
(AHS–AMH) Gambling Strategy Working Group

Table of contents

Executive summary	1
Our strategy framework, 2010–2014.....	5
Our purpose.....	7
Guiding principles	7
Goals, strategies and objectives	8
Public awareness and education	8
Intervention, counselling and support services	10
Responsible gambling environments	11
How we work	12
Leadership and co-ordination	12
Research	13
Planning, implementation and evaluation.....	13
Conclusion.....	15
References	16
Appendix A: Historical content: The issue in brief	23
Why we need a gambling strategy	23
Where we've come so far	23
Where to now	25
Appendix B: Facts about gambling in Alberta.....	26
Alberta's unique situation	26
The gambling scene	26
Legislation	26
Structure	26
History	27
Gambling patterns	29
Costs and benefits related to gambling	30
Problem gambling	30
Social and economic costs.....	31
Social and economic benefits	34
Issues and trends	36
Challenges and opportunities	42
Appendix C: The parameters of the AGLC and AHS–AMH partnership	47
Definitions	49
Progress to date, 2005–2008	51

Figures and tables

Figure 1: The framework model	6
Figure 2: Provincial revenue from government-operated gaming per person 18+, 2006–2007	35
Figure 3: Provincial gaming devices, 2001–2007	36
Figure 4: Provincial gaming revenues, 2001–2007	37
Figure 5: Amount of government gaming revenue distributed to problem gambling (dollars per adult).....	44
Table 1: Gambling activity popularity among Albertans.....	29
Table 2: Gaming venues in Alberta.....	28
Table 3: Gaming proceeds supporting charities and the Alberta Lottery Fund, 2002–2007 (\$ millions).....	34
Table 4: Percentage of gaming revenue to disposable income, by province, 2006–2007	35
Table 5: Alberta’s expenditures on problem gambling, 2006–2007	44

Executive summary

Introduction

In March 2008, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) and Alberta Health Services–Addiction and Mental Health (AHS–AMH)* took action to jointly develop a renewed Problem and Responsible Gambling Strategy for 2010–2014, to address problem gambling and promote responsible gambling in a collaborative, comprehensive and sustainable manner.

Gambling is a popular recreational activity enjoyed by thousands of Albertans. Revenues from the province's charitable gaming model support health, research, education, recreation and cultural programs. The gambling industry provides jobs and contributes to Alberta's tourism and hospitality sectors.

82% of Albertans have gambled in one form or another. Of those, 1.3% are at high risk of becoming problem gamblers. 3.9% are at moderate risk, and 9.8% are at low risk of developing gambling problems.

The minority of gamblers who develop gambling problems can face social, financial, legal and health-related problems which can impact their families, workplaces and communities. Implementing the strategies outlined in this framework will help to ensure that the social, charitable and economic benefits of gambling continue to far outweigh any negative societal costs, and to ensure the long-term sustainability of a vibrant gaming industry in Alberta.

Background

In April 2005, the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) and the AGLC developed a joint strategy to ensure a shared understanding and commitment to guide the development and delivery of responsible and problem gambling programs in the province.

From 2005 to 2008, the two organizations have continued to work together on initiatives identified in the original Problem and Responsible Gambling Strategy to minimize harm associated with gambling.

Strategic priorities for 2010–2014

The 2010–2014 Problem and Responsible Gambling Strategy outlines a framework to guide goals, strategies and key actions in three areas:

- public awareness and education
- intervention, counselling and support services
- responsible gambling environments

* In May 2008, Alberta Health Services (AHS) was formed and brought together partners in health-care delivery from across the province, including the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC). The Addiction and Mental Health (AMH) Branch of AHS now manages the Problem and Responsible Gambling Strategy at a provincial level.

AHS and the AGLC will continue to work together to ensure the successful completion and execution of the following goals and objectives from April 1, 2009 through March 31, 2014.

Public awareness and education

Goal 1: Albertans have the information they need to make responsible decisions with regard to gambling, know the risks and signs of problem gambling, and know where to find help. Albertans who choose to gamble do so in a responsible way.

STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Educate and inform Albertans about responsible gambling and problem gambling.
- 1.2 Improve community knowledge and awareness of the impact of gambling.
- 1.3 Provide individual Albertans, especially adolescents and young adults, with the tools, information and support they need to make reasonable decisions with regard to gambling.
- 1.4 Leverage existing partnerships to expand the distribution channels for gambling-related information.
- 1.5 Ensure that Albertans who are experiencing gambling problems know where they can go for help.

Intervention, counselling and support services

Goal 2: All Albertans have access to problem gambling treatment choices that meet their individual needs.

STRATEGIES

- 2.1 Reduce the stigma and encourage problem gamblers and the people who are close to them to get the help they need.
- 2.2 Develop targeted early intervention strategies to reduce the risk factors for problem gambling.
- 2.3 Develop programs that help problem gamblers regain control.
- 2.4 Design and deliver sustainable, accessible, high-quality programs and services that are tailored to meet the needs of specific genders, age groups and cultural subgroups.

2.5 Explore technology to provide alternative forms of problem gambling treatment, resources and support services.

2.6 Pilot programs to promote problem gambling awareness at the community level.

2.7 Identify and promote the use of programs like “Gambling Decisions” and “Becoming a Winner.”

Responsible gambling environments

Goal 3: Gambling continues to take place in a well regulated and enjoyable environment. Gambling service providers—including licensed operators, government regulators and facility staff—understand their role in maximizing the playing experience and by creating a socially responsible gambling environment by minimizing any negative individual or societal effects of gambling.

STRATEGIES

3.1 Provide Albertans with a range of enjoyable gaming products accessible in venues that provide healthy gambling environments designed to enhance the playing experience and promote socially responsible gambling.

3.2 Continue to work with the gaming industry to ensure gaming staff are appropriately trained in responsible and problem gambling awareness and intervention protocols.

3.3 Continue to work with the gaming industry to develop and implement venue-based interventions that help gamblers keep track of the time and money they spend on their gambling activities.

3.4 Expand the responsible gambling information centre program.

Conclusion

Both Sides of the Coin defines the principles and provides the framework for continuing to address problem gambling and to support responsible gambling initiatives in Alberta.

The government of Alberta seeks to protect the public interest through the development of sound gaming policies and regulations. Working together, the AGLC and AHS address “both sides of the coin” with regard to gambling. By providing the leadership and co-ordination of a

Both sides of the coin

provincial gambling strategy, we strive to ensure that the social, charitable and economic benefits of gambling outweigh any negative societal costs so that Albertans continue to enjoy the benefits of a strong, vibrant, socially responsible gaming industry.

Our strategy framework, 2010–2014

Preventing problem gambling and supporting responsible gambling

The following pages set out the framework within which the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) and Alberta Health Services (AHS) will work together to develop prevention strategies that address problem gambling and promote responsible gambling behaviour in Alberta.

The framework defines the purpose of our co-operative efforts and outlines goals for three key domains of activity. Our goals are articulated as general end purposes toward which our effort will be directed: they set out what we hope to achieve. Each goal is supported by a number of objectives—narrow, explicit statements of intent that define how we plan to reach our goals. The skeleton of our proposed action plan is also included.

Our framework recognizes that solid operational processes must be in place in order for us to implement our strategies and reach our goals. These processes are interlinked. As shown in Figure 1, they work in concert, and underpin every program and activity we propose to undertake. (See the “How we work” section on page 11 for details on these operational processes.)

Both sides of the coin

Figure 1: The framework model



Our purpose

Working together, the AGLC and AHS address “both sides of the coin” with regard to gambling. The purpose of our partnership is twofold: to reduce problem gambling and to promote responsible gambling behaviour. Through our joint activities, we aim to minimize gambling-related harm and create an enjoyable, sustainable gambling environment in which Albertans who choose to gamble have the resources they need to make informed decisions.

In the gambling environment we envision, the vast majority of Albertans who choose to gamble will continue to enjoy the benefits of a vibrant and socially responsible gaming industry. Albertans who find themselves troubled with gambling-related problems should have access to treatment programs and services that meet their individual needs.

Guiding principles

- The responsibility for minimizing the risk of problem gambling is a shared one.
 - The gambling industry and community-based charities are responsible for complying with legislation while offering gambling entertainment that meets the needs of the public.
 - Individual Albertans are responsible for complying with gambling-related laws and seeking out the information they need to make informed choices related to their gambling activities.
- Albertans should know the facts about gambling. They should have the information to be able to make choices, including choices about whether or not to participate in gambling activities.
- Gambling revenue helps to support the quality of life enjoyed by the people of the province, and makes a significant contribution to Alberta’s economic health.
- Gambling is a legitimate business activity that supports charities and generates benefits for all Albertans.
- Diligent regulation of Alberta’s gaming industry is necessary to maintain the trust and respect of the public. Alberta’s gambling

programs reflect the values and preferences of the province's communities.

- Policy decisions are guided by evidence-based practice and informed by ongoing evaluation. At the same time, new ideas are valued, and pilot projects provide opportunities to test the merit and effectiveness of new approaches.
- Regardless of their individual circumstances, characteristics or background, Albertans who have gambling problems have access to an appropriate range of treatment and support programs.
- Local problems need local solutions. Communities have the responsibility and the right to make decisions that reflect the particular needs of their citizens.
- All Albertans benefit from government regulated gambling. Therefore, the government, along with businesses, industry stakeholders, service agencies, researchers, educators, communities, families and individual citizens should work together to offer those who suffer from problem gambling the assistance and resources that are needed.

Goals, strategies and objectives

The AGLC and AHS will work together in partnership to create socially responsible gambling environments and to minimize gambling related harms. To this end, we have outlined goals, strategies and objectives for the following three areas:

- public awareness and education
- intervention, counselling and support services
- responsible gambling environments

Public awareness and education

Goal 1: Albertans have the information they need to make responsible decisions with regard to gambling, know the risks and signs of problem gambling, and know where to find help. Albertans who choose to gamble do so in a responsible way.

STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Educate and inform Albertans about responsible gambling and problem gambling.
- 1.2 Improve community knowledge and awareness of the impact of gambling.
- 1.3 Provide individual Albertans, especially adolescents and young adults, with the tools, information and support they need to make reasonable decisions with regard to gambling.
- 1.4 Leverage existing partnerships to expand the distribution channels for gambling-related information.
- 1.5 Ensure that Albertans who are experiencing gambling problems know where they can go for help.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide responsible and problem gambling information through health facilities, gaming venues, educational and financial institutions, and other relevant public locations.
- Promote the inclusion of responsible and problem gambling information as part of the provincial education curriculum.
- Develop a jointly sponsored website to host information on responsible and problem gambling.
- Develop ongoing province-wide social marketing campaigns that promote responsible gambling behaviour and provide information on problem gambling services.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	LAST ACTUAL	TARGET
Percentage of Albertans who are aware of responsible and problem gambling behaviour	Establish baseline	Exceed baseline
Percentage of Albertans who are aware of responsible and problem gambling services	Establish baseline	Exceed baseline

Intervention, counselling and support services

Goal 2: All Albertans have access to problem gambling treatment choices that meet their individual needs.

STRATEGIES

- 2.1 Reduce the stigma and encourage problem gamblers and the people who are close to them to get the help they need.
- 2.2 Develop targeted intervention strategies to reduce the risk factors for problem gambling.
- 2.3 Develop programs that help problem gamblers regain control.
- 2.4 Design and deliver sustainable, accessible, high-quality programs, resources and services that are tailored to meet the needs of specific genders, age groups and cultural subgroups.
- 2.5 Explore technology to provide alternative forms of problem gambling treatment, resources and support services.
- 2.6 Pilot programs to promote problem gambling awareness at the community level.
- 2.7 Identify and promote the use of programs like "Gambling Decisions" and "Becoming a Winner."

OBJECTIVES

- Implement the recommendations from the evaluation of the Voluntary Self-Exclusion program.
- Develop web-based counselling and tele-counselling services for problem gambling treatment.
- Establish a community grant program for innovative approaches that support responsible gambling and prevent problem gambling in Alberta.
- Develop responsible and problem gambling resource materials targeted to youth, seniors and people for whom English is a second language.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	LAST ACTUAL	TARGET
Percentage of Albertans that gamble responsibly	Establish baseline	Exceed baseline
Percentage of problem gamblers who access treatment services	Establish baseline	Exceed baseline

Responsible gambling environments

Goal 3: Gambling continues to take place in highly regulated and socially responsible environments. Gambling service providers, including licensed operators, government regulators and facility staff understand their role in promoting responsible gambling and reducing problem gambling.

STRATEGIES

- 3.1 Provide Albertans with a range of government regulated gaming products accessible in venues that also provide assistance and resources to those who require it.
- 3.2 Continue to work with the gaming industry to ensure gaming staff are appropriately trained in responsible and problem gambling awareness and intervention protocols.
- 3.3 Continue to work with the gaming industry to develop and implement venue-based interventions that help gamblers keep track of the time and money they spend on their gambling activities.
- 3.4 Expand the responsible gambling information centre program.
- 3.5 Develop targeted early intervention strategies to reduce the risk factors for problem gambling.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop a code of conduct for licensed operators that supports responsible gambling.
- Develop social responsibility policy toolkits for gaming venue operators and their staff.
- Establish accreditation and awards programs to encourage industry compliance with socially responsible gambling best practices.

Both sides of the coin

- Develop a joint responsible and problem gambling signs and fixtures program within gaming venues.
- Conduct research into card-based play for gamblers to monitor and control their play.
- Establish responsible gambling information centres in every casino and racing entertainment centre in the province.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	LAST ACTUAL	TARGET
Percentage of Albertans who agree gaming venues promote responsible gambling practices	Establish baseline	Exceed baseline
Percentage of accredited gaming venues	Establish baseline	Exceed baseline

How we work

The following section describes the key operational processes that define how we work, and outlines the specific strategies that will support these processes.

Leadership and co-ordination

The partnership of the AGLC and AHS provides the leadership and co-ordination needed for successful, ongoing liaison with community partners and with the gambling industry. We involve our stakeholders in addressing local and provincial gambling issues and concerns, and explore opportunities for sharing expertise and resources.

We also strive to find the most effective ways of working together. To this end, we plan to undertake the following tasks:

- Establish operational and decision-making processes and appropriate funding levels to support the jointly sponsored programs and activities that fall within our strategy framework.
- Identify the most effective ways of reporting progress.
- Identify appropriate messaging streams and co-ordinate corporate communication plans to prevent duplication of efforts and ensure that messages have maximum impact. Sometimes this may mean

collaborating; sometimes agency-specific communication may be more effective.

- Establish an Alberta Responsible Gambling Council to inform and help to guide implementation of province-wide initiatives, and to monitor results.

Research

Sound policy development and good decision-making depend on good research. This is why the partnership is committed to the following strategies:

- Build the research base needed to support evidence-based decision-making and best practices.
- Investigate and monitor best practices that are currently in place in other jurisdictions.
- Track emerging issues and trends.
- Facilitate knowledge transfer between academic researchers, the gambling industry and government.

Planning, implementation and evaluation

- Develop terms of reference and guidelines to determine what types of activities are best undertaken jointly, and what types are best undertaken individually.
- Identify the most effective ways of maintaining ongoing communication and information-sharing.
- Develop efficient processes for sharing information with regard to the development of our respective policies, communication plans, business plans and budgets.
- Evaluate gambling-related programs and services to ensure they remain relevant and effective today and in the future.
- Develop an appropriate approval mechanism that meets the needs of the AGLC and AHS governance structures.

Both sides of the coin

- Develop mechanisms to ensure that appropriate funding for problem gambling treatment and prevention programs is included in future discussions regarding gaming expansions.

Conclusion

The strategy framework presented in this document outlines why Alberta needs a gambling strategy, and why the AGLC and AHS need to work together in the prevention of problem gambling, while supporting responsible gambling in the province.

The framework outlines the purpose of our joint endeavours. It defines the principles that will guide our efforts and the operational processes that will underpin our work. It sets out our goals and objectives, and suggests some of the specific actions we propose to take to reach our goals.

Working together, the AGLC and AHS will strive to ensure that Albertans continue to enjoy the social, charitable and economic benefits of a strong, highly regulated and socially responsible gaming industry. We will strive to ensure that Albertans who have gambling problems have access to treatment programs and services that meet their needs.

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Appendix A

Historical context: The issue in brief

Why we need a gambling strategy

Gambling is a popular recreational activity enjoyed by thousands of Albertans. But it's not just fun.

Gambling generates significant revenues for the province—dollars that support health and wellness programs, education, recreation, culture and the arts, the voluntary sector, and the charitable organizations that are the lifeblood of our communities. The gambling industry provides jobs that contribute to a healthy economy, and generates positive spinoffs for the tourism and hospitality sectors.

At the same time, for a relatively small number of Albertans, gambling is a problem: gambling can cause social, financial and health-related harm for individual gamblers, their families and the communities in which they live.

The AGLC and AHS have long recognized that the business, economic and social aspects of gambling are closely intertwined; the economic benefits that Albertans derive from the gaming industry and social responsibility measures that mitigate the societal costs of gambling are simply two sides of the same coin. Working together, AHS and AGLC strive to minimize negative consequences and provide treatment and support for Albertans for whom gambling is a problem.

Where we've come so far

The AGLC and the addictions staff from AHS have a long history of working together. Indeed, much of the success of our organizations stems from the strength of the partnership we have built over the years.

Under the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Act and related legislation, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission licenses and regulates the province's gaming industry. It develops and enforces policy to ensure the integrity of the gaming industry. It sponsors education and awareness programs, supports research and ensures that gambling operations, policies and programs reflect the values of Albertans,

honour Albertans' right to personal choice and respect the rights of communities to make decisions that reflect local interests.

AHS delivers information, prevention and treatment services for problems related to gambling. It operates and funds problem gambling treatment and prevention programs in communities across the province. In 2006–2007, about 35,000 Albertans received treatment for problems related to alcohol, other drugs or gambling, and more than 150,000 benefited from the agency's information and prevention services (AADAC, 2007c).

The AGLC and AHS share much common ground. Indeed, in fulfilling its mandate to conduct and manage provincial lotteries and generate revenue for the Government of Alberta the AGLC works to enhance and maximize the playing experience while helping Albertans make good decisions about their gambling behaviour. The AGLC and AHS also provide Albertans with information, prevention and treatment for gambling problems.

In 2005, in recognition of their shared role, staff from both organizations prepared a proposal to develop and fund jointly sponsored problem and responsible gambling programs. These programs were articulated in the *Problem and Responsible Gambling Strategy: Proposal for Enhancement to Address Increasing Problem Gambling Needs in Alberta, 2005–2006*, which was approved by the respective boards of AADAC and the AGLC in April 2005.

The proposal was presented to the inaugural meeting of AADAC's and the AGLC's key stakeholders in 2005. It was reviewed by this same stakeholder group at a day-long consultation in Edmonton on October 26, 2007. Consultation participants expressed support for the partnership, and commended the two organizations' program efforts. Participants suggested that more funds should be directed toward research, data collection and information sharing about gambling-related issues and trends, and advised that new technology should be embraced wherever possible in research and training efforts. The stakeholders went on to identify a need to generate greater awareness about problem gambling, especially among youth, seniors, new immigrants and other population subgroups.

Where to now

Since the release of the 2005 strategy, a joint working group of AGLC and AADAC staff has planned and launched a number of programs. The results of this work are summarized in Appendix C (see page 50).

The document you are reading outlines a strategic framework for jointly sponsored AGLC and AHS programs for the period 2010–2014. Once the respective authoritative bodies have approved the proposed framework, the working group will develop operational plans and budget estimates for our joint programs. (To date, funding for such programs has been secured through memoranda of understanding.)

Working together, we can meet the needs of Albertans and their communities through programs that support responsible gambling, and prevent and minimize harm from problem gambling.

Keeping in sync

The work of the AGLC and AHS shares a vision that supports both organizations' business plan goals and priorities.

Promoting strong and vibrant communities is one of five government priorities identified for 2008 (Government of Alberta, 2008b). The mandates of the AGLC and AHS directly correspond to the following two proposed mechanisms for addressing this priority:

- expanding and improving services and facilities for substance abuse and addictions
- promoting and supporting culture by implementing Alberta's cultural policy, which recognizes that recreation (including gaming), sports, heritage and the arts are part of culture and valued by Albertans

Appendix B

Facts about gambling in Alberta

Alberta's unique situation

- Gambling problems do not occur in isolation. Alberta's economic boom brings cultural and social challenges associated with a young, diverse, affluent and rapidly growing population.
- As the population grows and per capita incomes increase, Albertans have more disposable income to direct toward leisure activities such as gambling. This boosts gambling revenues that benefit Albertans, but it also increases the risk that people will experience gambling-related harm.
- Alberta's charitable gaming model is unique in Canada. (The model is described in the following section.)

The gambling scene

Legislation

Gambling in Alberta is governed by the following:

- Canada's Criminal Code
- the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Act, and related legislation

With the exception of some community bingos where minors accompanied by adults can play for cash prizes up to \$50, the legal gambling age is 18.

Structure

There are two categories of gambling in Alberta: provincial and charitable.

Provincial gaming includes ticket lotteries (such as Lotto 6/49 and keno), slot machines, video lottery terminals (VLTs) and electronic bingo. These gaming activities are delivered by private operators and bingo associations under retailer agreements managed by the AGLC. The AGLC supplies and maintains the electronic equipment. It deposits the proceeds from provincial gaming to the Alberta Lottery Fund,

which supports thousands of volunteer, public and community-based projects across the province. In 2006–2007, provincial gaming generated gross profits over \$2.16 billion. Of this, \$1.53 billion was deposited to the Alberta Lottery Foundation, compared with \$1.39 billion the previous year (AGLC, 2007b).

Charitable gaming includes bingos, casinos,* raffles and pull-ticket draws operated by licensed charitable and religious organizations that earn proceeds from these activities. Licensed private operators provide the facilities and management services to conduct these activities. Licensed charities provide the people power to run casino gaming events, and use the net proceeds to fund community projects.

More than 9,300 groups are eligible to conduct charitable gaming events in Alberta (AGLC, 2008). Of these, nearly 6,500 chose to conduct charitable gaming activities in 2006–2007 (AGLC, 2007b). That year, charitable and religious groups in Alberta raised more than \$270 million through charitable gaming, compared with \$248 million the previous year (AGLC, 2007b).

History

In 2001, the AGLC completed a comprehensive two-year review of Alberta’s gaming licensing policies. The review was launched to address the growth and maturity of the province’s gaming industry. Its purpose was to respond to pressures for further growth and expansion “while continuing to ensure the effective regulation and socially responsible delivery of gaming activities in the province” (AGLC, 2001, p. 16-1).

The gaming licensing policy review brought social responsibility to the forefront of Alberta’s approach to gambling. It led to the development of a well-thought-out, stringently regulated approach to the growth of the gaming industry. And it reaffirmed the province’s commitment to balancing choice with social responsibility.

The following policies and practices have been implemented in response to recommendations from the licensing policy review:

* Charitable organizations earn proceeds from casino table games as well as a portion of the proceeds from slot machines located in casino facilities.

Both sides of the coin

- The development of gaming policy is directed by solid guiding principles that balance the need for social responsibility with Albertans' right to personal choice.
- Communities have the opportunity to express their support or lack of support of proposals to develop new casino and bingo facilities.
- The limit on the number of VLTs in Alberta, which was imposed in 1995, has been upheld at 6,000 machines.
- The number of VLT locations has fallen by almost 18%, from 1,272 in March 2002 to 1,049 in March 2008. (The 2001 policy review recommended a reduction of 10% to 15%.)
- Problem gambling funding, education and treatment programs receive ongoing funding.
- Policy development is based on sound, Alberta-based research on gambling issues and trends.
- Policies are reviewed on a regular basis.

A note on the data

Many of the charts and tables in this document use the year 2002–2003 as a reference point. This is the first fiscal year during which the AGLC enacted recommendations from the 2001 gaming licensing policy review.

Gambling patterns

WHO, WHAT, WHERE AND HOW MUCH

- A study conducted in 2001 showed that more than eight in 10 (82%) adult Albertans gamble (Smith & Wynne, 2002). Most gamble for recreation, and do not experience any harmful consequences.
- In 2000, 68% of Alberta seniors (aged 65 and older) gambled, compared with 82% of the adult population as a whole (James, 2003).
- The second cycle of The Alberta Youth Experience Survey (TAYES), conducted in 2005, yielded the following results on gambling among Alberta’s students (Phare, Lane, & Elliott-Erickson, 2007):
 - In 2005, the majority of Alberta adolescents in grades 7 to 12 (63%) gambled, up from 41% in 2002.
 - The most common gambling activities among youth were playing cards for money (41%), playing scratch tabs (35%) and betting on sporting events with a friend (28%).
 - Alberta had the second-highest youth gambling rate among Canadian provinces. Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest rate (65% in 2003); Manitoba had the lowest rate (37% in 2004).
- In 2007–2008, as shown in Table 1 (Leger Marketing, 2007, in press), buying lottery and raffle tickets and playing slot machines in casinos were the most popular gambling activities among Albertans. Two in three Albertans had purchased lottery tickets in the twelve-month period before the AGLC’s annual survey of gambling preferences. Nearly four in 10 had purchased raffle tickets.

Table 1: Gambling activity popularity among Albertans

	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008
Lottery tickets	68%	69%	67%	67%	68%	66%
Raffles	53%	47%	48%	51%	45%	38%
Pull tickets	19%	19%	15%	17%	14%	15%
Bingos	18%	16%	13%	15%	13%	11%
VLTs	17%	16%	15%	14%	13%	14%

	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008
Casino table games	12%	11%	10%	12%	12%	12%
Slots in casinos	—	—	18%	21%	19%	20%
Slots at racetracks	—	—	5%	4%	5%	7%

- As shown in Table 2 (AGLC, 2003, 2008), Albertans' gambling preferences have changed. The number of bingo halls has declined by nearly a third, while the number of casinos has grown by 44%.
- Overall, however, the number of gambling venues in Alberta has remained relatively constant over the past decade.

Table 2: Gaming venues in Alberta

Gaming venues	March 2002	March 2008	Change
Bingo association halls	57	41	-28%
Charitable casino facilities	16	23	+44%
Racing entertainment centres	2	3	+33%
Locations with VLTs	1,272	1,049	-18%
Ticket lottery centres	2,060	2,345	+14%
TOTALS:	3,407	3,461	

Costs and benefits related to gambling

Problem gambling

The prevalence of problem gambling and its impact on Albertans are areas in which new research is required. As part of a new socio-economic impact study currently underway, the Alberta Gaming Research Institute will be investigating this issue. Results are expected in mid-2010.

In an AADAC-commissioned survey conducted in 2003, 53% of adult Albertans surveyed believed that gambling problems had increased in Alberta over the past year, and 29% believed that problem gambling was a serious problem in their communities (AADAC, 2003b).

- A study conducted in 2001 showed that approximately 5% of adults who gamble experience moderate (3.9%) to severe (1.3%) problems (Smith & Wynne, 2002). Based on today's adult population in the province, it is estimated that these figures represent approximately 140,000 individuals with moderate to severe gambling problems.

- TAYES 2005 results showed that nearly 1 in 10 Alberta adolescent students (8.8%, or about 25,000 individuals) met the gambling screen criteria for at-risk gambling; 3.6% (more than 10,000 individuals) met the criteria for problem gambling (Phare, Lane, & Elliott-Erickson, 2007).
- According to provincial problem gambling prevalence studies reported in the *Canadian Gambling Digest 2006–2007* (Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, 2008), Alberta has a higher proportion of moderate-risk and problem gamblers than all other jurisdictions except Saskatchewan (5.9% in 2001). For Canada as a whole, the prevalence of problem gambling among adults is estimated to range between 2.5% and 3.5%. The lowest rates of problem gambling are in Prince Edward Island (1.6%) and Quebec (1.7% in 2002).
- Several studies suggest that moderate-risk and problem gambling rates may be two to 15 times higher for Aboriginal Albertans than for the general adult population (Wardman, el-Guebaly, & Hodgins, 2001).
- Researchers have estimated that 39% of Alberta's gaming revenue is derived from gamblers with moderate to severe problems (Williams & Wood, 2005).

Social and economic costs

To a large extent, the social and economic cost of gambling is related to the consequences of problem gambling. Research is currently underway to quantify these costs and prepare a cost-benefit analysis of gambling in Alberta. In 2008, Anielski Management Inc. developed a methodological framework for conducting a study to assess the socio-economic impact of gambling (SEIG). A contract has been awarded by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute to a team of researchers to conduct a study in Alberta using the SEIG methodology, the results of which are expected in 2010.

The SEIG study will address the challenge of quantifying the social and economic costs of legalized gambling. It will identify a number of areas in which gambling could impose costs on society. These include problem gambling prevalence, suicide rates, family relationships, crime and public sector costs. The public bears the burden of gambling through government expenditures on gambling treatment, education and prevention, regulatory costs related to the gambling industry,

public infrastructure costs related to gaming industry development, and government subsidies to the industry (Anielski Management Inc., 2008).

GAMBLING-RELATED HARM

- People who have gambling problems can experience a range of harm (AADAC, 2004, 2007c; Anielski Management Inc., 2008; James, 2003):
 - Problem gamblers may struggle with depression, anxiety, stress-related conditions (insomnia, digestive problems, back or neck pain), guilt, outbursts of rage, loss of initiative and low self-esteem.
 - Problem gamblers are often lonely and alienated from their families: indeed, family members may be the last to know when a loved one has a gambling problem.
 - Problem gamblers may neglect responsibilities at home, work or school. Other consequences include lost time from work, loss of employment, financial instability, personal debt, bankruptcy and criminal involvement.
- Problem gambling is often related to alcohol and other substance abuse. In 2005–2006, 34% of the individuals who sought AADAC assistance for gambling problems were also seeking treatment for alcohol abuse, 28% for abuse of other drugs, and 11% for tobacco use (AADAC, 2007a).
- Problem gambling affects the family through interpersonal conflict, instability, marital breakdown, and disregard for the safety and care of any children (AADAC, 2004).
- Problem gambling affects the community, especially in small centres. People who have financial troubles as a result of problem gambling may be less able to support local businesses, and problem gamblers who struggle with depression or health issues may be less likely to volunteer their time and talents to support community activities.
- Researchers have noted that casinos can have a "cannibalistic effect" on small businesses because they attract a disproportionately large share of the available human resources and disposable income in local communities (Wynne & Shaffer, 2003). Small businesses may be forced to close, with the result

that fewer retail and entertainment options are available to citizens.

SUICIDE

- Gambling is a factor in about 2% of suicides in Alberta (AADAC, 2007c). A recent study suggests that problem gamblers are 3.4 times more likely than the general population to attempt suicide (Newman & Thompson, 2007).

ABSENTEEISM AND PRODUCTIVITY LOSS

- In 2002, 30% of Alberta employees (502,140 individuals) reported having gambled while at work (AADAC, 2003a).
- In 2002, Alberta employees missed approximately 377,000 working hours as a result of gambling. This is the equivalent of \$7.24 million, an estimate that does not take into account the cost of lost production or sales, the cost of replacing absentee workers, additional staff time or overtime to make up lost productivity, the cost of accidents that injure workers or damage property, higher insurance rates and medical costs (AADAC, 2003a).

ELDER ABUSE

- Some research suggests that a growing number of seniors are adversely affected by someone else's gambling. Among Alberta seniors surveyed by AADAC in 2000, a small proportion reported that they were worried or experiencing stress as a result of someone else's gambling, or that they had been asked for money to support someone else's gambling activities (James, 2003).

CRIME

- Crimes that are directly related to gambling include loan sharking, extortion, fraud, embezzlement, bookmaking, theft (by patrons and employees) and money laundering. Family violence and child neglect are indirectly related to gambling (James, 2003).
- In 2007-2008, the AGLC handled 414 criminal investigations into matters of gaming-related theft, fraud, forgery and cheating at play; 53 people were charged under Canada's Criminal Code (AGLC Investigations Branch Statistics, 2007-2008).

Social and economic benefits

The socio-economic impact of gambling (SEIG) study (Anielski Management Inc., 2008) has identified a number of social and economic benefits derived from gambling. Further research is in progress to quantify the dollar value of these benefits. Results are expected in mid-2010.

Alberta's gambling industry generates revenue and contributes to the growth of the province's economy, the prosperity of its communities and the quality of life of its citizens. Many Albertans derive personal satisfaction from gambling for entertainment. Gambling also supports tourism, creates jobs and contributes to government revenues.

- A study by the Canadian Gaming Association estimates that 43,342 Albertans are directly or indirectly employed in the province's gambling industry (HLT Advisory, 2008).
- Proceeds from both charitable and provincial gambling flow back to Alberta communities, either directly through charities and religious organizations that are licensed to conduct charitable gaming activities or through the Alberta Lottery Fund. As shown in Table 3, licensed charities earned \$270 million from charitable and provincial gaming activities in 2006–2007, and \$1.53 billion was transferred to the Alberta Lottery Fund (AGLC, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007b).

Table 3: Gaming proceeds supporting charities and the Alberta Lottery Fund, 2002–2007 (\$ millions)

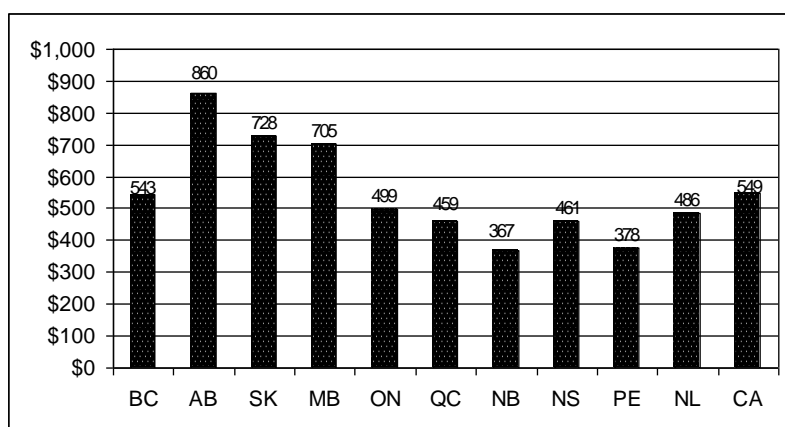
	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007
Charitable Gaming Proceeds	206	226	238	248	270
Alberta Lottery Fund transfers	1,090	1,125	1,260	1,389	1,534

- In 2006–2007, provincial gaming generated \$1.53 billion in revenue to the Alberta Lottery Fund, up from \$1.09 billion in 2002–2003. Government of Alberta projections suggest that gambling revenue will contribute \$1.61 billion to the Alberta Lottery Fund by 2010–2011 (Government of Alberta, 2008a).
- In 2006–2007, 4.4% of Alberta's government revenue was derived from gaming, compared with 4.3% the previous year. The average for all Canadian provinces was 2.4%; Prince Edward Island had the

lowest percentage at 1.4% (Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, 2008).

- In 2006–2007, government-operated (provincial) gaming generated \$860 in revenue for each Albertan over 18 years old, as shown in Figure 2 (Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, 2008). This amount was the highest in Canada, and well above the Canadian average of \$549.

Figure 2: Provincial revenue from government-operated gaming per person 18+, 2006–2007



Although Alberta’s per capita gaming revenue is the highest in Canada, Albertans also have the highest disposable income (Government of Alberta, 2007). In terms of gaming revenue as a percentage of disposable income, Alberta ranks third behind Saskatchewan and Manitoba, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Percentage of gaming revenue to disposable income, by province, 2006–2007

	Disposable income (\$)	Gaming revenue per person 18+	% of revenue to disposable income
Saskatchewan	23,310	728	3.1
Manitoba	23,518	705	3.0
Alberta	32,109	860	2.7
British Columbia	25,194	543	2.2
Canada	25,624	549	2.1
Nova Scotia	22,972	461	2.0
Quebec	23,274	459	2.0

	Disposable income (\$)	Gaming revenue per person 18+	% of revenue to disposable income
Newfoundland & Labrador	25,232	486	1.9
Ontario	26,181	499	1.9
Prince Edward Island	21,318	378	1.8
New Brunswick	22,456	367	1.6

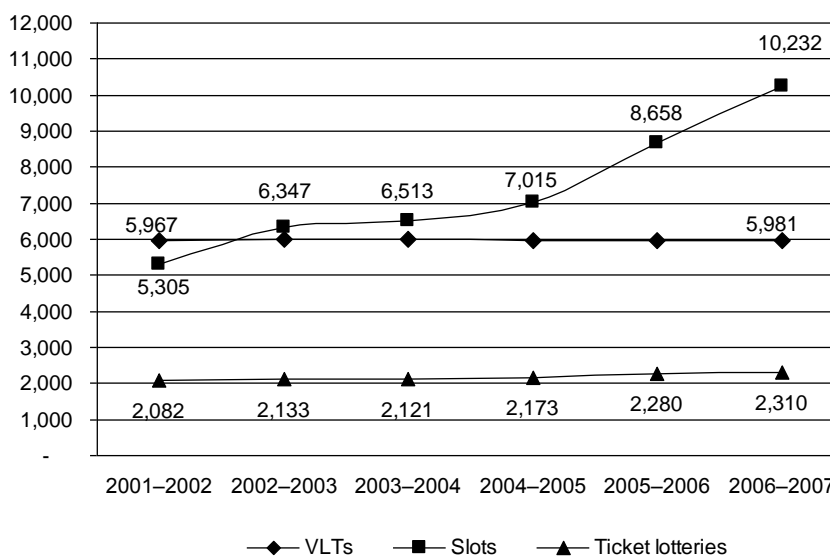
Issues and trends

The face of gambling is changing, as is its impact on Alberta’s economy and society.

Alberta’s gaming industry experienced significant growth over the past decade, as new casinos and gaming facilities were introduced. This growth is now steadily levelling off, and certain forms of gambling are declining in popularity (as shown in Table 1 on page 27). For example, only 11% of Albertans reported having played bingo in 2007–2008, compared with 18% in 2002–2003.

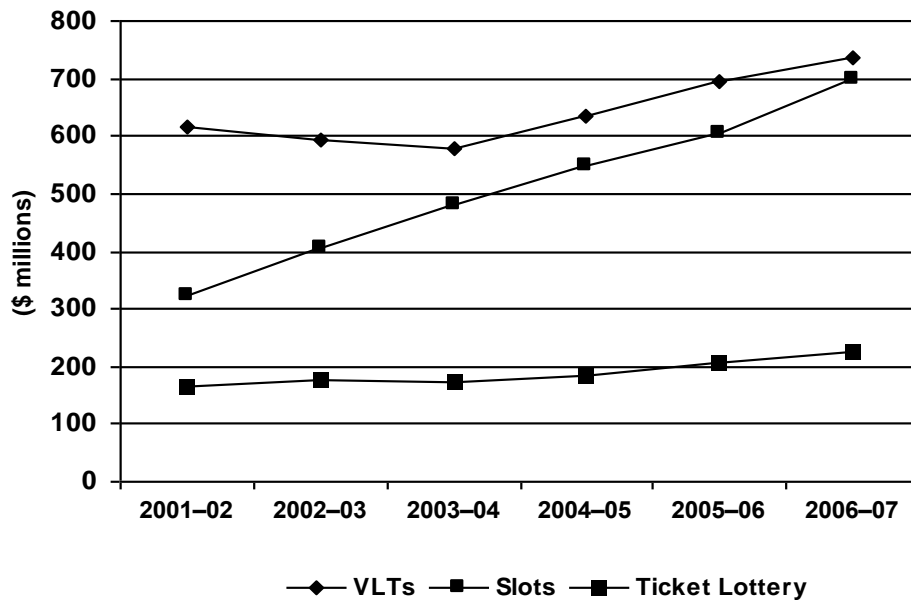
Alberta has fewer bingo association halls than a decade ago. On the other hand, as shown in Figure 3, although the number of VLTs has been capped at 6,000, the number of slot machines has grown significantly (AGLC, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007).

Figure 3: Provincial gaming devices, 2001–2007



As shown in Figure 4, revenues from slot machines, VLTs and other forms of electronic gaming have increased (AGLC, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007). As the gaming industry matures, there is more competition for the gambling dollar. "Players always want games that are faster and easier" (Rose, 2006). In response, operators seek to offer new high-tech gambling options that may be more dangerous than more traditional forms of gambling.

Figure 4: Provincial gaming revenues, 2001–2007*



Alberta’s diversity and population growth increases the demand for targeted gambling-related prevention and treatment services.

The number of people who gamble is expected to grow as Alberta’s population increases. As the population grows, the incidence of problem gambling is also likely to rise, as are the related personal, social and economic costs.

An increase in the number of people who need help with gambling problems parallels greater demand for addiction services (AADAC, 2007c). Although funding to AADAC has increased over time, funding levels have not kept pace with the province’s population growth. In 2002–2003, Alberta spent \$5.76 million on problem gambling programs, compared with \$6.04 million in 2006–2007. This is an

* Revenues from electronic bingo are not included.

increase of about 5% (Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, 2004, 2008). In the same period, Alberta's population grew by 11%.

As Alberta's population grows and becomes more diverse, it will become increasingly important to develop accessible, culturally sensitive problem gambling prevention and treatment programs and resources that address the needs of Albertans of all ages.

A range of prevention and treatment approaches is required to meet the particular needs of specific communities, and to reach out to young people and other population subgroups (Williams, West, & Simpson, 2007). More funding for programs and services is also required. Although technology provides opportunities for developing creative, innovative prevention and treatment programs, dedicated funding has not been allocated.

In 2006–2007, AADAC's budget was \$94.6 million, while provincial revenues from alcohol, tobacco and gambling were more than \$2.9 billion. The commission's budget represented a fraction of government revenue from alcohol and tobacco sales and legalized gambling, and less than 1% of the total budget for the Ministry of Health and Wellness (AADAC, 2007c).

Modern-day gambling options are more dangerous than low-tech ones.

Research suggests that the prevalence of problem gambling increases when new forms of gambling (especially new electronic games) are introduced (James, 2003). Electronic gambling tends to be the most addictive form of gambling (Williams, West, & Simpson, 2007). In a clinical study of AADAC clients in 1997, 71% of participants said they had not experienced gambling problems prior to playing VLTs (James, 2003).

Electronic gaming has proliferated in Alberta. Researchers expect that continued expansion of this type of gaming will lead to an increase in spending and an increase in problem gambling rates, particularly among teens, young adults and Aboriginal Albertans (James, 2003).

More youth are at risk of gambling-related harm.

Albertans need to act now to prevent gambling problems in the next generation. Immediate action is critical given that the proportion of Alberta youth who gamble grew from 41% in 2002 to 63% in 2005 (Phare, Lane, & Elliott-Erickson, 2007). There is a need for innovative, technology-based problem gambling awareness, prevention and

treatment programs that focus on youth and young adults, and reflect the needs and interests of young people.

Problem gambling among youth is associated with psychological, behavioural, social, academic and legal difficulties. Youth with gambling problems often have low self-esteem, suffer from anxiety and depression, and have problems controlling anger and impulsiveness. Their relationships with family and friends are often strained, and they often lie about the extent and nature of their gambling problems. Their academic performance suffers, and they are more likely to skip classes and drop out of school. Compared with non-gamblers, they are more likely to participate in criminal and delinquent behaviour.

Compared with youth who seldom or never gamble, youth gamblers are three to four times more likely to drink alcohol, smoke tobacco or use other drugs. They also have an increased risk of developing an addiction to alcohol or other drugs.

Starting to gamble at an earlier age is a risk factor associated with problem gambling in later life. Prevention programs that use the Internet and other technology to build awareness of gambling and its risks may help to avert problems before they start.

Albertans face barriers in access to services.

Our society imposes a huge burden of shame on people with addiction, particularly on those with gambling problems. Gambling addiction frequently goes hand in hand with alcohol and other drug problems, and the stigma of problem gambling may prevent people from seeking help when they need it. Of 50 problem gamblers who participated in a 2004 study, 70% said they avoided seeking face-to-face help because of the stigma associated with their addiction (Cooper, 2004).

Only a small proportion of problem gamblers seek treatment at AHS–AADAC. In 2005–2006, 8% of AADAC’s clients identified gambling as a reason for coming to AADAC (AADAC, 2007a). The 2,300 adults who came to AADAC with gambling problems represent less than 2% of the adult Albertans who are estimated to be problem gamblers. The 49 young people who came to AADAC with gambling problems represent less than 0.5% of the estimated number of Alberta youth who experience gambling problems.

Results from the Seniors and Gambling study conducted by AADAC in 2000 indicate that few seniors know where to go for information about gambling, or where to go for help (James, 2003).

For Albertans who live in rural or remote parts of the province, proximity to services can often pose barriers. For Aboriginal people living on reserve, jurisdictional issues can impede access to gambling prevention programs and treatment services (James, 2003).

Internet gambling is growing in popularity.

In 1995, there were just 24 Internet gambling sites accessible online. By 2006, there were more than 2,500 sites being used by an estimated 14 million to 23 million people (Wood, Williams, & Lawton, 2007). Online gambling offers easy access and increases users' isolation; this may lead to more problem gambling in Alberta.

Seniors may be at greater risk of gambling-related problems.

In 2000, 67.8% of Alberta seniors (65 and older) gambled, compared with 82% of the adult population as a whole. As the Baby Boom generation ages, this pattern of behaviour may change significantly (James, 2003). Researchers have identified a number of risk factors that may contribute to problem gambling among seniors. These include loneliness, limited financial resources, declining health and the amount of leisure time after retirement (Frisch, Fraser, & Govoni, 2003).

Legal liability for mitigating the risk of gambling-related harm is a growing issue across Canada.

Recently, a \$3.5 billion proposed class-action lawsuit was launched on behalf of gamblers who allege they asked to be barred from Ontario's casinos, but were still allowed in. The suit claims the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) did not do enough for those who banned themselves from Ontario casinos, through the OLG's self-exclusion program.

Lawsuits have been launched in a number of jurisdictions. The basis of litigation has tended to be the "duty to warn" the public of the addictive qualities of electronic gaming machines. For example, a class-action suit in Quebec is seeking \$700 million, claiming that the provincial government failed to warn the public of the potential danger of becoming addicted to VLTs (Lipton, 2003). In 2007, a complaint filed with Canada's Competition Bureau alleged that "deceptive

technologies” used in VLTs and slot machines entice gamblers into risking too much of their money (Eby, 2007; Tutton, 2007).

Litigation related to duty of care is expected to develop incrementally, on a case-by-case basis.

Public opinion is an important factor in determining the long-term sustainability of the gambling industry.

Socially responsible gambling policy reflects the values and beliefs of individual citizens and communities. AGLC-commissioned market segmentation studies show that, in 1993, most Albertans were neutral in their attitudes toward gambling, whereas about 15% were morally opposed. By 2003, the proportion of Albertans opposed to gambling had grown to 34%, but the proportion that supported gambling remained relatively stable at about 26%. This suggests that Albertans’ attitudes toward gambling are becoming more polarized.

The long-term health of the gaming industry depends on maintaining the support of Albertans with neutral attitudes about gambling. If the opinions of this group of Albertans swing, there is a danger that growing opposition to gambling may lead to demands for prohibition. In the United States, for example, gambling “booms and busts” have occurred in 70-year cycles in which liberal or neutral attitudes toward gambling have been followed by general prohibition (Rose, 2006).

Continuing public support for gambling is contingent upon preserving the long-term well-being of Alberta’s citizens and communities. Unless Albertans are confident that the gaming industry maintains integrity, continues to offer an enjoyable product and generates revenues for all Albertans in a socially responsible manner, they may withdraw their support. In 2003, for example, 200 VLTs were removed from seven Alberta communities that voted against VLT gambling in local plebiscites (Goatcher, 2006). If anti-gambling public opinion grows to the point that gambling of any kind is prohibited, significant benefits and revenues will be lost.

Socially responsible gambling is the right thing to do.

Citizens should be able to make informed choices about the products and services on which their hard-earned dollars are spent. Effective consumer protection is a key element of Alberta’s efforts to promote the health and wellness of its citizens.

The Health and Wellness Ministry's business plan goal of "healthy people in healthy communities" involves providing Albertans with information that will help them make healthy lifestyle choices that promote their individual well-being. The ministry's goal of reducing harm from substance use and gambling problems involves comprehensive, collaborative action to provide addiction information, prevention and treatment services. It engages individuals, families and communities in reducing gambling-related harm (Alberta Health and Wellness, 2008).

Challenges and opportunities

Attitudes can be a barrier.

Today, most Albertans gamble legally and gambling is socially accepted, but only a few decades have passed since gambling was prohibited by Canada's Criminal Code. Some Albertans continue to regard gambling as a vice that, by definition, is evil and immoral. And some Albertans view problem gambling as symptomatic of a flawed character rather than an addiction. The result is that people with gambling problems may be reluctant to seek help, and when they do, may not receive the type of help they need.

Both the AGLC and AHS are vulnerable to media criticism, which can sway public opinion even when it is not based on fact.

Clarity, efficiency and accountability are key.

The Government of Alberta is involved in the gaming business because there is a benefit to Albertans. Albertans expect clarity and accountability from their government.

The challenge for the AGLC and AHS is to create a socially responsible gambling culture and at the same time, to prevent and minimize harm from problem gambling. Clear, streamlined, mutually approved operating practices are needed to ensure that programs developed and managed by the partnership consider both sides of the coin.

Effective programs are evidence based, but there are gaps in what we know.

There are gaps in what we know about gambling, gamblers and the gambling industry. For example, what is the current prevalence of gambling and problem gambling in Alberta? What are the real social and economic costs and benefits of gambling? Is the current range of

problem gambling information, prevention and treatment services appropriate? What works and what doesn't in terms of prevention, harm reduction and treatment best practices? What are the most effective methods for monitoring and measuring success?

There is a need for a co-operative, globally co-ordinated program of research that includes industry, academic and public representatives (Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, & Shaffer, 2004). The challenge is to ensure that the gambling research agenda informs public policy development, and to bridge the gap between academic theory and industry and government practice. It is difficult to address this challenge without sufficient human and financial resources.

Resources are limited and expectations are high.

The AGLC and AHS set high standards for the work they do. They are leaders in their respective fields, so public expectations are high.

Providing Albertans with reliable information is important for preventing problem gambling and ensuring that people who have gambling problems know where and how to find the help they need. Successful prevention and awareness campaigns will increase the number of problem gamblers who seek help; long-term staffing and program plans will be needed to ensure a timely response to growing demands for treatment services.

In addition, research shows that effective prevention and treatment programs have a long time horizon. Sustainable funding is needed to support long-term programs that engage and mobilize individuals and communities—and to ensure that Alberta does not fall behind other jurisdictions in dealing with problem gambling.

Funding pressures are increasing.

In 2006–2007, Alberta spent more than \$6 million on problem gambling awareness and prevention, research and treatment (as shown in Table 5). This was the third-largest problem gambling distribution among Canadian provinces, after Ontario (\$36.6 million) and Quebec (\$21.8 million). Alberta spent an additional \$922,072 on responsible gambling programs (Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, 2008).

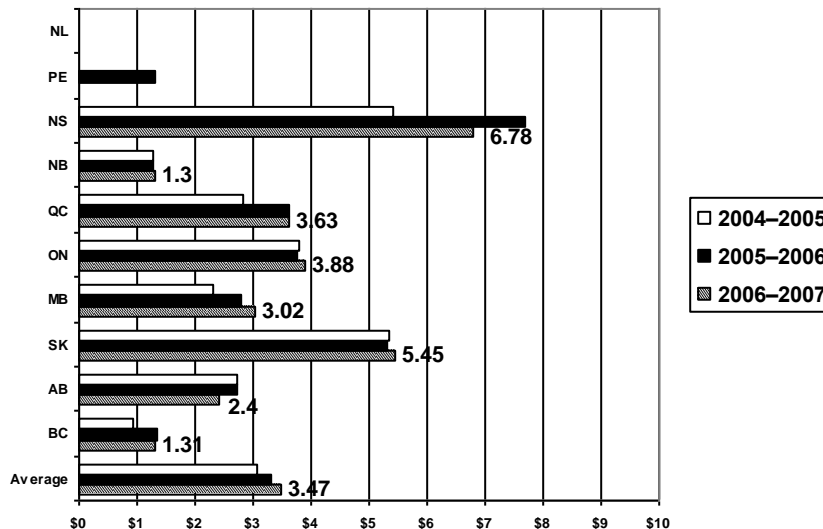
Table 5: Alberta’s expenditures on problem gambling, 2006–2007

Awareness and Prevention	1,135,729
Research	1,500,000
Treatment	2,984,395
Other	417,935
Total	6,038,059

Although the dollars spent represent a considerable investment, on a proportionate basis, Alberta’s spending on problem gambling is the lowest in Canada. The *Canadian Gambling Digest 2006–2007* reports that 0.4% of the gambling revenue collected by the Alberta and British Columbia governments was distributed to address problem gambling. At the other end of the spectrum, Nova Scotia and Ontario dedicated 2.8% and 2% respectively. On average, Canadian provinces distributed 1.3% of their gambling revenue to address problem gambling.

Alberta’s per capita expenditures on problem gambling also lag behind those of other provinces. As shown in Figure 5, Alberta’s problem gambling allocation was \$2.40 per person aged 18 and older, compared with a national average of \$3.47 per person. Nova Scotia had the highest allocation at \$6.78 per person; New Brunswick had the lowest at \$1.30 (Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, 2007a, 2007b, 2008).

Figure 5: Amount of government gaming revenue distributed to problem gambling (dollars per adult)



As Alberta's population continues to grow, so will the need for more funding specifically dedicated to preventing problem gambling and supporting responsible gambling in the province.

There is power in partnership.

The AGLC and AHS have a clear mandate to lead a provincewide campaign to prevent problem gambling and support responsible gambling in Alberta. We have strong relationships with our respective stakeholders, and we invite the active commitment and involvement of these stakeholders and the community at large. Our diverse, extended networks of partners, including the Alberta Gaming Research Institute, provide unique opportunities to reach Albertans and to create a socially responsible gambling environment.

For example, the AGLC's connections with the gambling industry provide an entry point for access to the expertise, ideas and resources of this sector. AHS's school programs and connections with cross-ministry youth programs provide a way to reach young Albertans; its connections with health care and mental health service providers open new channels through which gambling information can be relayed.

Awareness is an important precursor to action.

Governments and citizens around the world are increasingly better informed about gambling-related issues. There is growing appreciation and concern about social responsibility. This makes it easier to catch people's attention and build buy-in for responsible gambling programs.

Technology offers opportunities to develop more wide-reaching and cost-effective programs and services.

New technology is constantly being developed to help gamblers make informed decisions and to create safer gambling environments:

- Smart cards help gamblers keep track of the money they are spending.
- Responsible gambling features (RGFs)—time clocks, money-spent displays, pop-up time reminders and toll-free helpline numbers—help VLT players manage their time and money.
- Biometric technology and facial recognition programs identify people who have signed voluntary self-exclusion agreements to control their gambling behaviour.

Both sides of the coin

- The Internet provides new distribution channels for gambling information messages, and a proven gateway for reaching young Albertans.
- Tele-counselling, web-based counselling and video conferencing open new doors for delivering prevention and treatment services.

Appendix C

The parameters of the AGLC and AHS partnership

Working together

There is power in partnership. Working together makes it possible to share ideas, expertise and resources. It helps both our organizations stay on top of emerging issues, anticipate trends, prepare for changes in the gambling environment and prevent the harm that ensues when gambling becomes a problem.

Working together recognizes that the respective mandates of AHS and the AGLC are complementary: preventing problem gambling means gambling responsibly. AHS's role in treatment, information and prevention of gambling problems supports and enhances the AGLC's work to regulate the gaming industry and ensure responsible gaming practices. Our organizations support one another in fulfilling these roles. We come at problems together, and work co-operatively to find effective solutions that deal with both sides of the coin.

A co-ordinated approach avoids duplication of efforts and helps us get the most value for dollar. It allows us to share technology and research findings. It makes it possible to draw on one another's networks and expand the sphere of expertise with which we address the multitude of external and internal factors that can lead to problem gambling. Sharing ideas and experiences helps us "create connectedness" and develop creative, innovative approaches to the problems we face. It helps us strengthen relationships with our own respective partners and stakeholders, and makes it possible to draw on a broader range of knowledge. In this way, it breaks down the barriers to a collaborative, Reno-style approach to responsible gambling policies and practices.

In working together, we can draw on the trust and goodwill each organization has generated over the years. Each can draw on the other's credibility, reputation and long-term experience. Collectively, the AGLC and AHS have legislative authority and a government-authorized, province-wide mandate to address the full spectrum of issues related to the regulation of gaming, generation of revenue and

prevention of problem gambling and the support of responsible gambling in Alberta.

About the Reno Model*

The Reno Model developed by Blaszczynski, Ladouceur and Shaffer (2004) is widely accepted as a best-practice approach to reducing the incidence and prevalence of gambling-related harm in the community. It is based on two fundamental principles:

- “The ultimate decision to gamble resides with the individual and represents a choice” (p. 311).
- “To properly make this decision, individuals must have the opportunity to be informed” (p. 311).

The model advocates the adoption of a strategic framework that includes the following elements:

1. socially responsible policies founded on sound empirical evidence
2. co-operative action from consumers, gambling industry operators, health service providers, community groups and governments, and clearly articulated roles for each of these stakeholder groups
3. conceptual clarity in defining and measuring gambling-related harm
4. consensus about the definition and parameters of responsible gambling
5. a systematic approach to gambling research, using a common set of standardized definitions and outcome measures

* The model is so named because it was developed at a meeting in Reno.

Definitions

Gambling	<p>Gambling is any activity in which something of value is risked on an uncertain outcome. Buying a lottery ticket, speculating on the stock market, betting on a horse race, guessing who will win a sports pool or playing bingo, VLTs, slot machines or casino games are all examples of gambling (AADAC, 2001; James, 2003).</p>
Problem gambling	<p>For the purposes of this document, problem gambling is defined in the same terms as the clinical disorder of pathological gambling, which is characterized by the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– continuous or periodic loss of control over gambling behaviour– preoccupation with gambling and with obtaining money to gamble– irrational thinking– continuation of gambling behaviour despite negative consequences <p>Problem gambling has occasional or ongoing negative consequences on gamblers, their friends and families, and their communities (AADAC, 2004).</p>
Responsible gambling	<p>Responsible gambling is gambling that takes place in a controlled, regulated environment characterized by the following factors (Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, 2006; Government of Nova Scotia, 2005; Queensland Government, 2002):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– The potential for harm is minimized and vulnerable members of society (including young people, individuals at risk of developing gambling problems and people who are impaired by alcohol or other drugs) are protected.– People make informed decisions about their participation in gambling activities. <p>Individuals, communities, governments, regulators, treatment providers and the gambling industry share responsibility for responsible gambling.</p> <p>Responsible gamblers gamble for fun. They set and stick to limits on the time and money they spend on gambling. They never borrow money to gamble. They understand that uncontrolled gambling can cause serious and far-reaching problems, and they know where to seek out help.</p>
Problem gambler	<p>As defined in the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (Wynne, 2003), an individual who has Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) score of 8 or more. Problem gamblers have experienced adverse consequences from gambling and may have lost control of their behaviour. They are likely to be heavy gamblers.</p>

Both sides of the coin

**Moderate-risk
gambler**

As defined in the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (Wynne, 2003), an individual who has a PGSI score between 3 and 7. Moderate-risk gamblers may be at risk if they respond positively to three of the four correlates of problem gambling. They may or may not have experienced adverse consequences from gambling.

Social responsibility

Social Responsibility is a broad concept that refers to the actions by governments, corporations and industries, organizations, communities and individuals to maximize their positive impact and minimize their negative impact on society. The concept applies to a concern for collective welfare.

Progress to date, 2005–2008

The AGLC and AADAC launched their joint *Problem and Responsible Gambling Strategy: Proposal for Enhancement to Address Increasing Problem Gambling Needs in Alberta* in 2005–2006. Highlights of what the strategy has accomplished in its five priority action areas are summarized below.

Leadership and co-ordination

- From 2005 to 2007, the AGLC and AADAC sponsored three annual joint stakeholder meetings related to the 2005–2006 problem and responsible gambling strategy. Participants included treatment and research professionals, gaming industry representatives and members of the public.
- In partnership with the Alberta Charitable Casino Operators Association, the AGLC and AADAC launched the province's first Responsible Gambling Awareness Week in October 2007.
- The AGLC and AADAC established a joint working group that meets regularly to share ideas and information.
- We have worked hard to reach out and strengthen our relationships with sister organizations, including the Alberta Gambling Research Institute, the Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, the Responsible Gambling Council and the Interprovincial Lottery Corporation.

Prevention

- Posters, brochures and business-card-sized problem gambling self-tests were produced and distributed to every VLT location, casino, racing entertainment centre and bingo hall in the province. The purpose of these materials is to help players understand what responsible gambling means, and to ensure that people who have gambling problems know where to get the help they need.

Harm reduction and treatment

- We expanded the two-phase Deal Us In program, which provides responsible gambling awareness training for front-line staff, and intervention and communications training for management and

security staff. More than 5,500 industry workers have completed the training since the program was launched in 2004–2005.

- Nearly 1,000 AGLC staff have completed in-house training on problem and responsible gambling, and on the programs offered by AADAC and the AGLC. The program is now compulsory for new staff.
- More than 500 bingo workers have completed the A Good Call problem gambling awareness program developed in co-operation with the bingo industry. More than 11,000 industry workers have completed the *Winning Moments* DVD or Reel Facts online program to promote responsible VLT gambling.
- Since the first responsible gambling information centres (RGICs) were piloted in 2006, they have provided more than 121,000 gamblers and casino staff members with information about problem and responsible gambling. 15 Alberta casinos and one REC now have RGICs; the AGLC expects by 2012 they will be located in every casino in the province. RGIC staff provide gamblers with referrals for treatment. They also help gamblers enroll in and maintain their obligations with regard to the Voluntary Self-Exclusion (VSE) program, which helps people who have decided that gambling is not in their best interest stand by their decision not to gamble.

Research

- Ongoing research, program evaluation and environmental scanning have helped the AGLC and AADAC track trends and stay on top of the field. Since the launch of the 2005–2006 *Problem and Responsible Gambling Strategy*, the two agencies have undertaken comprehensive reviews of the following:
 - the Deal Us In training program for casino staff
 - the Responsible Gambling Information Centre pilot project
 - the Voluntary Self-Exclusion program
 - the VLT Awards program, which encourages retailers to follow responsible gaming practices
 - responsible gambling features on VLTs

Policy development and business planning

- Policies and practices to prevent problem gambling and support responsible gambling included the following:
 - The Minors Awareness Campaign launched in 2006–2007 targets lottery ticket retailers to ensure that they understand that underage gambling is illegal.
 - The ATM policy introduced in 2006 requires that automated teller machines must be located at least 15 feet from VLTs. The policy was implemented in response to research that problem gamblers access ATMs twice as often as recreational gamblers.