

Proposed expansion of gambling opportunities is a topic of concern in many communities. This Q&A is intended to inform and stimulate discussion about gambling expansion and its associated public health concerns.

1. What are OLG's plans for expansion?

- Two key areas of change are to: “expand regulated private sector delivery of lottery and gaming” and “renew OLG’s role in oversight of lottery and gaming.”
- In the six year period between now and 2017-18 OLG hopes to generate \$4.6 billion in additional net revenue.
- By 2017 they hope to have increased the yearly “net profit” by \$1.3 billion.
- According to a March 2012 briefing with OLG senior management, OLG wants to decrease the average age of their gambling customers by two years by 2017, and increase the percentage of Ontario residents who gamble from 70% (2011) to 75% by 2017.
- They also will be: (a) launching internet gambling; (b) expanding charitable gaming, including offering paper and electronic games at all bingo halls; (c) expanding lottery sales to multi-lane retailers, including grocery and big box stores; (d) discontinuing subsidization of the horseracing industry; (e) closing some racetracks slots and; (f) enabling private-sector gambling companies to operate a single gaming facility.

For more information visit:

[Modernizing Lottery and Gaming in Ontario. Strategic Business Review / Advice to Government](#)
[OLG Report Says Modernize Lottery and Gaming](#)

2. What is the current rate of problem gambling in Ontario?

- 1% of students (grades 7-12) have a gambling problem. This is approximately 8,800 students.
- About 2.5% of the province’s population experiences moderate to severe gambling problems. This is approximately 260,000 adults.

For more information, visit:

[The Mental Health and Well-Being of Ontario Students 1991-2013](#)
[Gambling and Problem Gambling in Ontario](#)

3. What are some of the risk factors for developing a gambling problem?

- Risk factors include accessibility to gambling venues, being a young male, non-white ethnic origin, low socioeconomic status, divorced or separated, and/or experiencing an early win. As well, it is very common for those with gambling problems to have other issues such as substance use disorders and depression.

For more information visit:

[Gambling Disorders](#)

4. An observation is sometimes made that there will always be those who develop gambling problems as a result of pre-existing disorders, and that increasing access to gambling opportunities has no significant impact on problem gambling prevalence. Is that true?

- No, having mental health and/or addiction issues other than problem gambling doesn’t guarantee that a person will develop a gambling problem. A person who is vulnerable will likely not develop a problem unless exposed to some form of gambling (e.g., a casino).

For more information visit:

[The Effect of Gambling and its Role in Problem Gambling](#)
[The Social Impact of Casinos: Literature Review and Cost Estimates](#)

5. What do we know about suicide among people with gambling problems?

- Based on a review of previously published studies, on average, 37.9% of the problem gamblers reported suicidal thoughts and on average 20.5% reported attempting suicide. Although these figures are rough estimates that don't take into account different sample sizes or research designs, suicide among problem gamblers is still a serious concern.
- Among Ontario students (grades 7-12) with gambling problems, 25% reported a suicide attempt in the past year of a survey and were about 18 times more likely to report a suicide attempt than other students.

For more information visit:

[Review of Problem Gambling and Co-morbid Disorders and Behaviours](#)
[Ontario Youth Gambling Report: Data from the 2009 Ontario student Drug Use and Health Survey](#)

6. What are some of the negative impacts of problem gambling on the family/significant others?

- Impacts include divorce, domestic abuse, financial instability, child abuse and neglect, anxiety, substance abuse, family dysfunction and negative psychological development among children.

For more information visit:

[The Effects of Pathological Gambling on Families, Marriages and Children](#)

7. What percentage of gaming revenue is derived from problem gamblers?

- 24.1% of Ontario's gambling revenues come from problem gamblers.

For more information visit:

[Gambling and Problem Gambling in Ontario](#)

8. What are the impacts of gambling expansion on problem gambling rates?

- Studies confirm a relationship between proximity to a casino and rates of problem gambling. For example, when Casino Niagara Falls opened, the rates of gambling-related problems increased in the surrounding area in the year after the opening, significantly more than in the province overall.
- There is also research that points to lowered frequencies of gambling problems after removing gambling opportunities. For example, in a Norway study on gambling participation, gambling frequencies and gambling problems were reduced after a ban on electronic gaming machines.

For more information visit:

[The Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling](#)
[Community Effects of the Opening of the Niagara Casino](#)
[Gambling Behaviour and the Prevalence of Gambling Problems in Adult EGM Gamblers when EGMs are Banned. A Natural Experiment](#)

9. Are there certain cultural groups that are more vulnerable than others to problem gambling?

- Aboriginals are more at risk for problem gambling and other addictions due to a number of historical and social factors.
- According to a literature review, problem gambling rates among Chinese communities range from 2.5%-4.0%

For more information visit:

[Problem Gambling in Canada](#)
[Gambling Among the Chinese: A Comprehensive Review](#)

10. What do we know about the financial implications of problem gambling?

- Bankruptcies have been studied more than any other aspect of problem gambling. The large majority of studies find that bankruptcy rates increase following the introduction of casinos.

For more information visit:

[The Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling](#)

The Impact of Gambling Expansion in Ontario Q&A

11. What do we know about the relationship between problem gambling and crime?

- Youth and adult problem gamblers are more likely to commit crimes than non problem gamblers.
- In a study of Ontario students grades 7-12, problem gamblers were much more likely than non-problem gamblers to engage in assault, carry a weapon, gang fight and carry a handgun.
- In a study of Ontario correctional facility offenders, the prevalence rate of problem gambling during incarceration was 4.4%, which is significantly higher than the general public. Almost 50% of the severe problem gamblers and ¼ of the moderate problem gamblers reported “being caught in a cycle of gambling, debt and crime.”

For more information visit:

[Ontario Youth Gambling Report: Data from the 2009 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey](#)

[Problem Gambling Inside and Out: The Assessment of Community and Institutional Problem Gambling in the Canadian Correctional System](#)

12. What is the impact of a new casino on the local economy (i.e. new jobs)?

- “Benefits to gambling venues, gambling related businesses, or any geographic area usually occur at the expense of other geographic areas and/or business sectors.”
- The fact that gambling expansion comes with public health consequences, namely problem gambling, and its associated problems (i.e. bankruptcy, divorce, suicide) should be the focus of attention vs. any economic advantages. The public health of Ontarians should take priority over revenue generation.

For more information visit:

[The Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling](#)

13. Is it true that large numbers of people leave the province to gamble because they don't have easy access to a gambling facility close to home?

- No, this is not true. The majority of casino patrons are going to be locals rather than from out of the province. For example, in Alberta, most casino revenue comes from people who live in close proximity to the venue, with this contribution being higher the closer the proximity. Out of province visitors represent a tiny fraction of Alberta casino patronage and revenue.
- According to Garry Smith, University of Alberta professor and gaming research specialist for the Alberta Gaming Research Institute “it is generally the case around the world with only a few exceptions (Nevada, Macau, and Monte Carlo) that most casino patrons come from the local area.”

For more information visit:

[Gambling in Alberta: History, Current Status, and Socioeconomic Impacts. Edmonton, AB](#)

14. How much money is spent each year on gambling advertising compared to the amount spent on treatment, education, prevention and research?

- In Ontario, gambling advertising and promotion is funded at six times the rate of treatment, education, prevention and research. In 2010-11 the Ontario Government allocated \$52.1 million toward treatment, education, prevention and research, while in the year ending March 31st, 2011, over \$300 million was spent on marketing/promotion.

For more information visit:

[Where the Money Goes. OLG Gives Back](#)

[OLG Annual Report 2010-2011](#)

15. Bingo halls will be acquiring new electronic machines which will operate similarly to slot machines. What are the concerns around this?

- Fast and addictive machine gambling will be located in bingo halls, in neighborhoods which have not had it previously.
- According to Kevin Harrigan, Research Associate Professor and Head of the Gambling Research Team at the University of Waterloo, “the structural characteristics of the new electronic Play on Demand (POD) games in Ontario bingo halls are similar to the structural characteristics of slot machines in that players can play every few seconds and many of the ‘wins’ are net losses such as wagering \$4.00 on Lucky Clover bingo and ‘winning’ \$1.00. Given their fast speed of play that is similar to slots, research needs to be conducted to determine the addictiveness of these games.”

16. Lottery expansion is part of the modernization process. What are the concerns around this?

- OLG plans to make lottery ticket purchases available online when they introduce internet gambling. This is of concern among youth who are susceptible to advertising.
- As well, given that gambling has social and health effects, any type of gambling expansion is of concern.

For more information visit:

[OLG Website: The Launch of Internet Gambling](#)

[Impact on Gambling Advertisement and Marketing on Children and Adolescents: Policy Recommendations to Minimize Harm](#)

17. Internet gambling will soon be regulated in Ontario. Are there certain populations that may have a problem with this?

- Youth internet gamblers are significantly more likely than non-Internet gamblers to be problem gamblers.
- Internet gambling has many risks, including anonymity, 24/7 access, the lack of protective safeguards, fast paced play and a format which will be colourful and exciting, particularly for tech-savvy youth.

For more information visit:

[Internet Gambling Amongst Adolescents: A Growing Concern](#)

[Internet Gambling among Youth: Cause for Concern](#)

18. What are some key public health messages that are important to communicate?

- CAMH strongly asserts that Ontario’s policy toward gambling should put priority on the public health of citizens over revenue generation. A few of our recommendations include:
 - Avoid exposure to high-risk gambling environments and modalities
 - Inform those who choose to gamble of the odds of winning, and of the potential consequences and risks

For more information visit:

[Gambling Policy Framework](#)

[Public Policy Gambling Documents from CAMH](#)

19. If I want to express my thoughts or concerns about new gambling opportunities coming to my community, what can I do?

- Call your City Counsellor Mayor, MPP, Premier and/or leads of provincial opposition parties
- Set up meeting in person or draft letters stating concerns
- Write a letter to the editor, or an article, for a local newspaper/magazine (online and/or print)