

CITY OF HAMILTON

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
Clinical and Preventive Services

TO: Mayor and Members Board of Health	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: November 18, 2013	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Health Promotion Problem Gambling BOH12040(a) (City Wide)	
SUBMITTED BY: Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC Medical Officer of Health Public Health Services Department	PREPARED BY: Susan Boyd (905) 546-2424, Ext. 2888
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Medical Officer of Health be directed to develop activities related to problem gambling prevention, including a focus on healthy public policy and development of a targeted local strategy;
- (b) That a 0.5 FTE position and health promotion activities be funded through gaming revenue to support the above work, at a cost of \$70,000 annualized, and referred to the 2014 budget process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gambling is a recreational activity that can lead to negative health and social impacts experienced by individuals, families and communities. Adopting a public health approach to gambling issues has been recommended as an effective approach to minimize potential harm. This approach was outlined in the Health and Social Impacts of Gambling BOH12040 (City Wide) report and adopted in Hamilton in December 2012.

Staff were directed to come forward with options to improve local gaming prevention activities, with potential funding provided through gaming revenue. Hamilton has existing gambling opportunities and citizens will have increased access to gambling through the Ontario Lottery and Gaming (OLG) Corporation's modernization plan. It is important to ensure that there is a strategy in place to minimize potential harm related to current and enhanced gambling opportunities.

A health promotion approach to prevention activities is supported as it recognizes that gambling behaviour occurs on a continuum in communities; from people engaging in healthy gambling behaviour, to individuals at low or moderate risk, and to individuals who experience problem gambling. Interventions need to be targeted to the different stages along the continuum. Although all prevention activities have been shown to have some effectiveness, it is recommended that mixed interventions addressing policy and education initiatives be undertaken.

In Ontario, there is a commitment to both accountable and responsible gambling delivery, as well as, participation in gambling activities. There are different organizations within the province that work in these areas. The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC), the Responsible Gambling (RG) Council, Ontario Problem Gambling Institute, Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission and the OLG Responsible Gambling Strategy, which all have a focus on a culture of responsible gambling and harm minimization.

This work has resulted in a provincial level of expertise in these areas. Although broad based provincial strategies are important and have a presence in Hamilton, it has been recommended that local strategies be developed to address specific needs of communities. It would be beneficial in Hamilton to develop a local prevention strategy to ensure that Hamilton develops healthy public policy, identifies and builds on existing strengths, maximizes provincial resources and develops locally driven solutions to address gaps.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 6

FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (for Recommendation(s) only)

Financial: This initiative would require funding of a 0.5 FTE position at \$70,000 per year and health promotion activities.

Staffing: Increased staffing would provide the necessary staffing resources to dedicate to this initiative.

Legal: No legal implications.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Chronology of events)

In 2010, the Ontario Government provided direction to the OLG Corporation to modernize commercial and charitable gaming in Ontario. In the OLG's 'Modernizing Lottery and Gaming in Ontario' report, it identifies the following expansion activities:

- An expansion of charitable gaming to allow bingo halls to deliver electronic games;
- A complete internet gaming platform including peer-to-peer games, selling lottery tickets and a process for private sector vendors to deliver internet gaming, with appropriate oversight; and
- A comprehensive strategic review of the lottery distribution network and land-based gaming facilities.ⁱ It also notes in the report that all initiatives are to include a commitment to socially responsible gambling.

In November 2012, the Toronto Public Health Unit released 'The Health Impacts of Gambling Expansion in Toronto' report.ⁱⁱ It provided a comprehensive review of the literature and recommended a public health approach be taken to address gambling issues. In December 2012, the Health and Social Impacts of Gambling BOH12040 (City Wide) report was brought forward and approved, adopting a public health approach in Hamilton. Recommendation (c) within the report directed staff to come forward with options to improve local gaming prevention activities, with potential funding provided through gaming revenue.

Although the majority of individuals participating in gambling activities do not experience negative consequences, the Canadian Community Health Survey data indicates that 1% of Hamiltonians (5,006 individuals) 12 years and up experience moderate or high risk problems; 18% of individuals (91,080) indicated they spent more money than they wanted to when gambling; and 4% (20,240) returned to try to win back money lost to gambling.ⁱⁱⁱ These behaviours are concerning as they can indicate that problematic gambling behaviour has started or the individual is moving towards problem gambling. This report is outlining options that can help protect and minimize potential harm to citizens in Hamilton.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS/LEGISLATED REQUIREMENT

It has been noted in the literature that adopting effective prevention activities has the potential to negatively impact revenue generation from gambling.^{iv} It has also been

noted that not engaging in effective strategies and healthy public policy to prevent problems, and identify those with gambling problems, can lead to significant social and health costs for communities.^v The OLG does identify in its responsible gambling strategy that it does not want players with problem gambling to be playing their games.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Staff consulted with Responsible Gambling Council Centre staff regarding the issue of responsible gambling. Information was gathered regarding the role of Responsible Gambling Resource Centres in our area. The possibility for future collaborations to assist with local initiatives was also discussed, as the Responsible Gambling Council are experts in the area of problem gambling prevention.

ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Introduction to Gambling

Legalized gambling has been expanding worldwide over the past 30 years. Gambling is a common activity and in the 2007/08 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) it was estimated that 66% of people in Ontario had participated in at least one form of gambling. The level of participation in gambling activities varies, moving on a continuum from no gambling behaviour or infrequent, through to individuals who gamble frequently and problematically. Gambling is an activity that has potential to become addictive, leading to significant health and social impacts for individuals, their friends and families.

Provincial Commitment to Accountable and Responsible Gambling

There are different organizational structures in Ontario that are responsible for the delivery of gambling activities and for addressing and minimizing potential harm related to gambling activities.^{vi vii} A brief description of these organizations is provided.

The MOHLTC is responsible for the implementation of treatment, prevention and research of problem gambling. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is responsible for gaming policy, the administration of the OLG Corporation Act.

The Alcohol Gaming Commission regulates the gaming industry. It oversees the OLG's advertising of the product, the extension of credit and how it operates the self-exclusion program. The Commission also approves all equipment (including electronic gaming machines) and games of chance that are offered.

The OLG Corporation is a provincial agency that operates lotteries, casinos, charity casinos and slot facilities in Ontario. The overall goals for OLG's Responsible Gambling Program are identified as reducing the incidence of problem gambling through prevention efforts, and to reduce harm for those who may have developed a problem by connecting individuals to community resources.

The Ontario Problem Gambling Institute, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, provides clinical services, education and training, policy development and research.

The RG Council is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to problem gambling prevention and works to reduce gambling risks by creating and delivering innovative awareness and information programs, and promoting the adoption of improved play safeguards through best practices research, standards development and the RG Check accreditation program.^{viii}

Effectiveness of Problem Gambling Prevention

Studies have evaluated the effectiveness of gambling prevention activities and the initiatives currently available in the Ontario system.^{ix x}

There is empirical support for a number of prevention initiatives. Prevention initiatives can be divided into two categories:

- Educational initiatives intended to change internal knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and skills; and
- Policy initiatives intended to prevent problem gambling through addressing availability and provision of gambling.

Policy initiatives have been found to be the most effective and this is similar to areas such as Tobacco Control. Educational initiatives have moderate to low effectiveness; however, this can improve if interventions are targeted (i.e. messages specifically designed for certain populations). It is recommended that mixed interventions, combining policy and educational initiatives, targeted at different stages on the continuum of gambling behaviours, are most successful in influencing gambling prevention.

Reviews of the Ontario prevention strategies have indicated that there is a commitment from the organizational structures described above, to offer accountable gambling activities and promote a culture of responsible gambling to minimize harm. It has been noted in numerous sources that although there is a strong commitment to gambling prevention, initiatives could be improved by purposeful, co-ordinated and strategically planned interventions across programs.

Currently in Hamilton, the Youth Gambling Awareness Program (YGAP), through the YMCA, provides a program educating youth, teens and young adults about the risks associated with gambling through a public health approach. Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Services (ADGS) provides limited educational initiatives based on requests from the community. There have been examples in certain communities (Melbourne, Victoria) where responsible gambling strategy and health promotion resource guides have been developed.^{xi xii} These documents have involved community partnerships and discuss the need for locally focused strategies. It is being recommended that a similar approach to prevention activities be adopted in Hamilton. This approach would involve mixed prevention interventions (both policy and educational initiatives), completion of a community needs assessment and increased co-ordination across community partners.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

(include Financial, Staffing, Legal and Policy Implications and pros and cons for each alternative)

The Board of Health could decide to not adopt a health promotion approach to prevention activities or endorse the development of a local prevention strategy. ADGS would continue to engage in limited education and awareness activities; however, this would continue to have moderately low effectiveness.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2012 – 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN:

Strategic Priority #1

A Prosperous & Healthy Community

WE enhance our image, economy and well-being by demonstrating that Hamilton is a great place to live, work, play and learn.

Strategic Objective

- 1.5 Support the development and implementation of neighbourhood and City wide strategies that will improve the health and well-being of residents.

Strategic Priority #2

Valued & Sustainable Services

WE deliver high quality services that meet citizen needs and expectations, in a cost effective and responsible manner.

Strategic Objective

2.2 Improve the City's approach to engaging and informing citizens and stakeholders.

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

Not Applicable

References:

- ⁱ Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation: Responsible Gaming, Policies and Programs.
- ⁱⁱ Toronto Public Health 2012. The Health Impacts of Gambling Expansion in Toronto: Technical Report. Available at: www.toronto.ca/health.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Canadian Community Health Survey 2007/08, Share File, Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-term Care.
- ^{iv} Williams, R.J., West, B.L., & Simpson, R. I. (2012). *Prevention of Problem Gambling: A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence, and Identified Best Practices*. Report prepared for the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. October 1, 2012.
- ^v Williams, R.J., Rehm, J. & Stevens, R.M.G. (2011). The social and economic impacts of gambling. Final report prepared for the Canadian Consortium for Problem Gambling Research. March 11, 2011.
- ^{vi} Report to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Review of the Problem Gambling and Responsible Gaming Strategy of the Government of Ontario, Stanley Sadinsky Q.C, March 2005.
- ^{vii} Accountability and Social Responsibility in Ontario's Legal Gambling Regime, Final Report to Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre (OPGRC), Nov. 16, 2009, Dr. Garry Smith, Alberta Gaming Research Institute, Dan Rubenstein, Scales of Governance, Ottawa.
- ^{viii} Responsible Gambling Council, Web site.
- ^{ix} Report to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Review of the Problem Gambling and Responsible Gaming Strategy of the Government of Ontario, Stanley Sadinsky Q.C, March 2005.
- ^x Accountability and Social Responsibility in Ontario's Legal Gambling Regime, Final Report to Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre (OPGRC), Nov. 16, 2009, Dr. Garry Smith, Alberta Gaming Research Institute, Dan Rubenstein, Scales of Governance, Ottawa.
- ^{xi} A Guide to using a Health Promotion Approach to Gambling: For Gambler's Help services and others working to reduce gambling-related harm in Victoria. State Government Victoria, 2009.
- ^{xii} Health promotion Resource Guide for Problem Gambling Prevention in Melbourne's North, June 2009.