

## Gambling: A Bad Bet

### A Discussion Paper by The Social Action Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

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“Just imagine the freedom!” “Just for the fun of it!” “You could be so lucky!” These are slogans, mixed with images of ecstatic winners enjoying a fabulous degree of wealth, which entice Canadians daily to participate in what is often portrayed as an innocent form of entertainment, and sometimes even as a civic duty. Since taking the first steps towards the legalization of gambling in Canada in 1969,<sup>1</sup> it has become one of Canada’s fastest growing industries: an estimated \$11 billion is spent annually in Canada on gambling, nearly twice the cost of running the federal government.<sup>2</sup>

As part of its mandate to be a prophetic Christian voice in society, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) calls its constituency to consider a more active role in opposing gambling in Canada. EFC is concerned about the phenomenal growth experienced by this industry, and about its detrimental impact on society in general as well as the destructive influence in the lives of many individual Canadians. There is an urgent need to convince many Canadian Christians who think of gambling as essentially benign — albeit a somewhat irresponsible form of entertainment — that gambling is indeed an insidious form of evil which takes advantage of the poor and disadvantaged and undermines a healthy and just society. The Christian community needs to become more passionately opposed, especially as new forms of “gaming” proliferate and the effects within society become more pronounced. One of the major reasons for this proliferation is the increased participation by governments which feel the pressure of fiscally difficult times and are increasingly considering the proceeds of gambling as quick and easy revenue without adequate consideration for the hidden social, economic and political costs.<sup>3</sup>

This paper encourages the constituents of EFC and other Christians to think biblically about gambling and about the appropriate relationship of social institutions and our governments towards the practice. This paper also provides a

framework for Christians in various vocations and institutions to speak out publicly against various types of gambling. It is designed to serve as a general resource for people interested in addressing the issue in a local situation by highlighting the more serious social and economic realities associated with gambling.

### The Problem of Gambling Defined

The word “gambling” is often used rather loosely as a generic term referring to activities involving “games of chance.” This sometimes creates confusion because many of the games used in gambling utilize regular, everyday types of games that involve randomness or chance. Most people enjoy playing games involving a measure of randomness as ways to recreate and entertain ourselves with children or friends (e.g., Yahtzee, Bridge or Careers). Being playful together before God is a good thing. Furthermore, Christians often recognize that random activity is a God-given characteristic of life in creation. The consistent characteristic of randomness which “games of chance” draw on is part of how people experience God’s faithful working in and through creation. Humans have given account of random activity in mathematical theories of probability. Too often random activity is attributed to deities, or forces, such as “Chance,” “Fate” or “Fortune,” instead of to God. Christians confess, however, that all things including random activity hang together in creation through Christ (John 1; Col. 1). In appropriate social settings and with appropriate intentions, games involving aspects of randomness are proper and good ways to entertain, give pleasure and assist in building healthy relationships among families and friends.

Such games, however, become distorted when the participants begin to expect more from them than God intends to give through them. God gives the gift of play but expects people to use it to His glory and to the good of our neighbours. Gambling represents a gross distortion of a God-given good. “Games of chance” become broken and distorted: (1) when the

person, agency or institution involved expects to secure material things of value as the main outcome of a game rather than healthy play and entertainment; (2) when money or things of value are staked on the outcome of a game of chance without reference to or determination by value or service or goodwill, and with the gain of the winners realized at the expense of the losers (even with the mutual consent of the losers); and (3) when special institutions (e.g., casinos, lottery corporations, bingo parlours, etc.) are established in which people are permitted and even encouraged to spend money to gratify the desire and thrill of seeking instant wealth.<sup>4</sup>

### **Biblical/Theological Perspectives**

Every form of evil issues from the inevitable tendency and inexorable desire within each person to exalt oneself against God and to make God fit the image most congenial to our mundane purposes. Although the Bible nowhere explicitly forbids participation in “games of chance,” the practice of gambling nevertheless facilitates this human tendency by challenging directly a number of biblical and theological principles which the church is called to uphold and extend.<sup>5</sup>

First and most importantly, gambling is a matter of the heart. Gambling becomes a form of covetousness which Scripture equates with idolatry when people anticipate receiving more from games of chance than they should expect. Gambling involves an obsession with, and a dependence upon, wealth as the ultimate source of salvation from problems and security for the future (Luke 16:13). Wealth promises to grant power, a measure of control, a way of bringing about self-aggrandizement, and the delusion of salvation.<sup>6</sup> Gambling exploits and promotes the lie that happiness can be bought, that our quality of life is determined by our material possessions, and that our economic status defines who we are. In this way, gambling can become one of the “powers” (Eph. 6:12) that separate us from God.<sup>7</sup>

Second, the success of gambling depends upon a persistent appeal to greed and covetousness, both of which are fundamentally opposed to the Ten Commandments and to the unselfishness taught by Jesus Christ. Gambling discourages contentment and violates the priorities outlined for Christians in 1 Timothy 6:6-10 (“But godliness with contentment is great gain ... but those who desire to be rich fall into temptation ...”).

Third, gambling contravenes our Christian duty to take upon ourselves a responsibility for the well-being of our neighbour instead of taking from our neighbour. The second greatest commandment is to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt. 22:39); among other things this means one is not to seek material advancement by taking advantage of the weakness of

others. The attempt (inseparable from gambling) to gain a monetary benefit from the inevitable loss and possible suffering of others is the antithesis of that love of one’s neighbour on which Jesus insisted, and it results in a weakening of human relationships within society.

Fourth, gambling encourages the reckless investment of God-given resources (Matt. 25:14-30). To risk money haphazardly is to disregard the insistence of the church in every age that possessions are a complex trust to be used with care and with an eye to service of both God and neighbour. Moreover, all people must one day give account to God for their choices as stewards of life and material resources. Because the odds are heavily against winning (the chance of being hit by lightning is seven times greater than winning big at gambling), it is irresponsible to use one’s limited resources for gambling.

Fifth, gambling undermines a healthy philosophy of work, industry and saving (Prov. 28:19,20; 13:11). Although our perspective of work has been tainted by sin, work itself is intrinsically good. The fact that human beings are made in the image of God, who Himself works, endows human labour with dignity and value: work is an integral expression of our worship of God. Work also has an instrumental value in that it is the means by which we are able to provide for our families and serve other people (2 Thess. 3:10). The desire to obtain something for nothing and to get rich quick, which motivates many to gamble, mitigates against such a biblical view of work: it devalues an ethic which values the significance of disciplined, productive labour in giving people a sense of dignity and in building a society. Instead it can discourage initiative and encourages people to rely on chance by nurturing a destructive appetite for instant economic prosperity.

Sixth, gambling can become habit-forming and addictive. Persons who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit will be characterized by temperance and self-control (Gal. 5:23). It is difficult for someone who is addicted to gambling to yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Seventh, gambling does distort otherwise legitimate forms of play and entertainment. Negative social patterns are encouraged where “play” has become debased. For example, when people sit in noisy bingo parlours for extended periods of time, genuine social interaction diminishes rather than increases.

### **Gambling Produces Societal Disease**

Gambling has had a widespread impact on Canadian society. The dynamic that motivates gambling — the desire to save ourselves from our problems and achieve happiness through

instant wealth — has meant that the spirit and results of gambling permeate our society like a disease. Just as a cancer-infested body is still a body, society still functions even though it is deformed. To change the metaphor, a vast array of participants — individuals, institutions and governments — can become “addicted” to gambling, producing addictive and distorted behaviours.

The Christian community needs to recognize and identify the problems that gambling is causing for these elements of society and provide wise and compassionate advice on how they can return to their God-given responsibilities. The aim of this section is to help Christians “discern the spirits” directing their various relationships and institutions and to chart a more biblically responsible route. In keeping with the Social Action Commission’s emphasis on public policy, the strongest emphasis is on the responsibility of the state. However, the state cannot and should not attempt to independently resolve all the problems of life. Other participants bear distinct responsibilities and these will be discussed as well.

### *1. Persons, families and marriages*

Critics of gambling have decried the increase in the number of compulsive or pathological gamblers caused by legalized gambling. Compulsive gambling, when excessive, wreaks social, psychological and economic havoc in the lives of individuals in addition to impinging upon the lives of family members, friends and employers. Studies vary widely in their estimates — from 2% to 14%<sup>8</sup> — concerning the proportion of gamblers susceptible to what has been labeled by the physicians as an “Impulse Control Disorder.” Profiles of pathological gamblers show that the majority are between the ages of 20 and 50, with the average between 30 to 35 years of age. Estimates of the proportion of males to females vary from 2 to 1 up to 5 to 1.<sup>10</sup> Although they come from all walks of life, the majority are concentrated in the lower-middle and middle classes. When compared to the general population, pathological gamblers are almost twice as likely to be high school dropouts, three times as likely to be unemployed, and to have household incomes under \$25,000.<sup>11</sup> Non-whites have higher rates of compulsive gambling behaviour than whites, and are also less likely to seek treatment. Although the data are still inconclusive, preliminary studies indicate that the rate of compulsive gambling is significantly higher among adolescents than among adults, setting the stage for a “colossal catastrophic calamity for the next generation” with the advent of electronic gambling.<sup>12</sup> A recent study of aboriginal youth concluded that problem gambling was more than three times more prevalent among aboriginal youth than non-aboriginal youth.<sup>13</sup>

Troubling also is the correlation between compulsive gambling, crime and a wide range of other social problems. The most common criminal behaviours associated with compulsive gambling include cheque forgery, embezzlement, employee theft, armed robbery, bookmaking, fencing stolen goods, loan fraud, selling drugs and tax evasion. People experiencing problems with gambling are more likely to drink alcohol frequently and use illegal drugs. Scholars studying gambling estimate that each compulsive gambler incurs social costs of approximately \$56,000 (in lost productivity, social services, losses due to fraud and crime, specialized policing), excluding trial and incarceration costs.<sup>14</sup>

A large proportion (approximately 80%) of the Canadian population participates in gambling each year in some form or another. If a low estimate of 2% is used to estimate the number of individuals dangerously vulnerable to pathological gambling, the number of people who are and potentially could be affected by the proliferation of various forms of gambling seen in Canada during the past decade is astounding. Problems related to pathological gambling have been exacerbated by the slow (and usually inadequate) response on the part of governments to provide meaningful assistance to people victimized, ironically, by their own policies.

### *2. Local communities and cities*

Cities are beginning to compete for gambling industries to locate in their jurisdictions. Proponents of gambling frequently promote the potential economic benefits of gambling, especially for communities hosting operations such as casinos (e.g., it will attract tourists, rejuvenate downtown cores, create jobs, provide economic development opportunities for remote areas, etc.). However, gambling provides neither a sound nor a stable foundation for an economic system. The long-term experience of communities with gambling operations indicates that the “potential” benefits are often vastly exaggerated. Robert Goodman writes, “There’s always been moral opposition to [gambling]. I think what’s new is people realizing that it has been an economic bust, that it’s sucking jobs out of cities, that you go to city after city and shops and restaurants are closing, while the only things opening are pawn shops.”<sup>15</sup> It is an industry that takes money from many and redistributes it to a few with most of the profits leaving the community. Large-scale gambling operations tend to cannibalize local economies, prompting job losses in other sectors and inhibiting economic development by redirecting discretionary spending away from established businesses, traditional charities and alternative forms of entertainment. (Casinos are often self-contained, and local businesses cannot compete with the complimentary incentives offered by casinos.)

The experience of Atlantic City is instructive: during its first eight years of casino gambling, manufacturing in Atlantic City dropped 54% and the income of other businesses declined by 23%.<sup>16</sup> Closer to home, Windsor casino advisor Nelson Rose openly admitted that gamblers come to gamble and then leave, usually without spending money in the local economy.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, revenues from gambling are often offset by the increased regulatory, law enforcement, and social costs (e.g., for counseling services, bankruptcies). One American study claims that for every \$1 of revenue realized from gambling, taxpayers must dish out \$3 for increased criminal justice, social-welfare, high regulatory and infrastructure costs.<sup>18</sup> Still others suggest that gambling tends ultimately to make a society poorer and to reduce government revenue by eroding propensities to work, save and self-invest, and by diminishing a charitable spirit among citizens.<sup>19</sup>

Proponents of gambling frequently point towards the number of jobs that gambling industries create. Generally, the jobs created by gambling operations are not high-wage, high-skill jobs and many do not even go to local residents.<sup>20</sup> Former Winnipeg police chief Robert Lunney observed that the good jobs go to trained outsiders and the local job opportunities are low-paying and high turnover, such as for maintenance, waitresses, bus boys, etc.<sup>21</sup> Statistics from the Winnipeg casino indicate that the majority of the workers earn between \$14,000 and \$24,000 which is well below the average salary in Canada.<sup>22</sup>

Though it is difficult to establish a direct causal link, the cumulative experience of many cities and states indicates that the presence of gambling enterprises tends to attract crime. This is particularly true of casinos.<sup>23</sup> Government legislation, regulation and on-site inspections do have a restraining impact on corruption within the industry, but clearly, cities with high levels of gambling activity also tend to have higher rates of criminal activity.<sup>24</sup> Las Vegas, the gambling capital of the USA, has for fifty years led the United States in crime, suicide, personal bankruptcy, political corruption and organized crime involvements. Gambling has consistently attracted satellite activities like loan sharking, drug dealing, prostitution and off-track betting parlours which are almost impossible to keep free from the criminal element.<sup>25</sup>

### *3. Associations and voluntary agencies*

A wide array of community associations, social service agencies, arts groups, athletics groups and the like are becoming increasingly dependent on casinos and lottery revenues for their day-to-day operations. In Alberta, the government requires casinos to be run by non-profit charitable

agencies as a means of generating financial support for these groups. As a result, casino companies provide the location, equipment and expertise while the various associations and voluntary agencies provide the licence and volunteers to run the casino. Furthermore, the proceeds from lotteries in Alberta are channeled into the Wild Rose Foundation which then awards funds to a wide range of projects and groups. This practice has left many groups dependent upon gambling revenue. Ironically, some of these groups deal with family problems which are aggravated by the group's own gambling activities! Another irony is that gambling revenues do not, over time, provide a reliable, predictable source of revenue. Such instability makes it difficult for the charitable organizations, municipal governments, cultural organizations, and community service agencies that have become dependent on the proceeds to meet their financial needs.<sup>26</sup>

### *4. Sports associations*

Gambling usually involves games. Many professional sports are taking on elements of gambling by surrounding themselves with sports pools and sports lotteries. Even minor league sports such as baseball and hockey are supported by the proceeds of lotteries and casinos.

### *5. Businesses*

A whole new group of businesses are growing around the provision of gambling venues and services. A number of companies run casinos across the country. Companies also provide tickets, entertainment, hardware and other services to the lotteries, casinos, horse racing establishments, etc. Local restaurants, corner stores and bars are co-opted by video lottery terminals (VLTs) which draw in more clientele in order to increase revenues in such establishments. Gradually, more businesses and jobs are becoming dependent on the practice of gambling.

Advertising agencies are also deeply involved in and dependent on lotteries and casinos. Significantly, governments provide a major source of gambling advertising. Most provincial governments have established gaming corporations with the mandate to promote their "product" to consumers and maximize revenues. The only way to do this on an ongoing basis is to recruit new players or generate more usage among existing players. Of all the public advertising done by governments, a vastly disproportionate amount is used to promote gambling; in fact it has become one of the government's most prominent messages to the public.

Not only does lottery advertising raise troubling questions, but the techniques used also create cause for concern. The aggressive promotional material produced by the gambling

industry preys upon human greed and concentrates on depicting winners and fantasies of easy wealth, dreams and freedom. The manager of Saskatchewan's Super Lotto openly admitted, "We base all of our marketing strategy on greed. It's our big selling point."<sup>27</sup> Advertising strategies have become increasingly sophisticated and complex by the use of glossy promotional materials; creative new game options which are routinely changed to sustain customer interest; clever television ads which increase in number on paydays, days of drawings and during prime-time viewing hours; ubiquitous billboards; and packaging tickets with ordinary purchases of gasoline and groceries. In addition to being unabashedly materialistic, the advertising of gambling is also exploitive: in all of the "information" disseminated by advertising, the astronomical odds against a substantial win are rarely admitted. Impressions are created that winning is easy. By featuring people who actually win and by emphasizing the possibility of winning, such advertising misleads people about the true probabilities involved. As a result, people are victimized by the specious inducement of a remote chance of winning a big prize.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, there is more to the promotion of government-sponsored gambling than merely persuading the public that participating is a good investment. At a basic level, the promotion of gambling needs to be seen as values education, falsely teaching that gambling is a benign or even virtuous activity ("it's for a worthwhile cause") which offers a desirable escape from the drudgery of work and limited means.<sup>29</sup> The fact that the message is sponsored by governments provides an implicit endorsement of greed, materialism, and the denigration of the value of productive work. In the long term, the encouragement of such values might be even more destructive than gambling itself.

#### *6. Aboriginal communities*

Several aboriginal communities have become engaged in gambling. The special federal laws dealing with aboriginal reserves provide that they may be exempt from certain gambling laws and regulations. Furthermore, some aboriginal people have argued that because gambling is such a great form of economic development for mainstream society, they also should be able to cash in on the gambling bonanza since reserves are commonly trapped in desperate poverty.<sup>30</sup>

#### *7. Schools and universities*

A number of local school and university programs are becoming dependent on gambling proceeds. Special programs and even some continuing programs receive a part of their funding from lottery proceeds. Some Christian schools in

Alberta found that government support for necessary capital projects was available only through a grant from lottery revenues distributed through the Wild Rose Foundation. This makes any opposition to gambling difficult for leaders within these institutions.

#### *8. Churches*

Some churches resort to bingo and other games as means of raising revenue for their programs.<sup>31</sup> Christians need to confess a measure of complicity in the justification of gambling within society. Christians have often failed to discern the spiritual dynamic behind gambling, and instead have seen it as merely a vice or undesirable habit, which has blunted the testimony of the church to the gospel message that salvation lies in Christ alone.

### **Recommendations for Christians in Society**

Gambling is insidious because it can destroy relationships in families, because of the high levels of participation among the poor and the young, and because of the rapidly increasing dependence on gambling revenues by governments. The EFC therefore encourages the Christian community in Canada to speak prophetically against gambling. More specifically, EFC recommends that its constituents use their "offices" in the various social institutions in which they function to:

- ask churches and parachurch agencies to provide to their members biblical teaching that exposes the materialistic and idolatrous impulse at the heart of the gambling addiction of society, and to provide practical suggestions for counteracting the pervasive influence of materialism;
- provide through community groups and schools information that describes the damaging and distorting effects of gambling on many individuals and institutions;
- encourage local action in communities, sports groups, and volunteer agencies to combat gambling, while setting up or supporting agencies that minister compassionately to people addicted or otherwise injured by the blight of gambling;
- encourage schools, community and other associations either to refuse or to exercise discretion in receiving revenues generated by gambling;<sup>32</sup>
- encourage businesses to provide goods and services that promote genuine human fulfilment and make fruitful use of God-given resources for the needs of all; and

- serve as an example for how games involving aspects of randomness can be redeemed as opportunities for joy in our families, friends, and communities.

## The Role of Governments in Society

Governments have not only given up their duty to regulate the practice of gambling, but now have also adopted a direct role and interest in the gambling industry. As noted previously, governments cannot deal with gambling entirely on their own. This does not give governments permission, however, to abdicate their proper but limited role and responsibilities within society.

EFC therefore calls the state to its task of ruling with justice for all, with prejudice toward none, and with charity towards the weak and powerless.<sup>33</sup> Justice is the characteristic of relationships that gives each person and institution its due. Government needs to create the legal framework which permits the interaction and integration of multiple social institutions in a just way. In our complex society, this means ensuring that people and institutions have the social room and access to the resources they need to fulfil responsibly their God-given callings. Governments must protect citizens from social hazards and criminal activity. For these reasons, the apostle Paul states that everyone is subject to the governing authorities and should pay taxes and show respect to the government to assist it in fulfilling these responsibilities (Romans 13). In relation to gambling, therefore, EFC highlights the following specific tasks of government.

(1) An essential role of the government within society is to promote good and restrain evil; thus it is inappropriate for governments to encourage, or still worse, to participate in activities that lead to addictive and injurious lifestyles. Governments should be removing social hazards, not introducing them. Involvement in gambling contravenes the government's obligation to improve the quality of life of its citizens and promote their general welfare. The government has a responsibility to ensure that people get a fair return for their labour and do a fair day's work for pay; gambling involves trying to get something for nothing — the opposite of what the government should seek for society.

(2) The responsibility of government to protect society cannot be fulfilled while it simultaneously tries to maximize gambling revenues. Reliance on gambling monies gives a government a vested interest in protecting the practice from criticism and opposition. Such financial incentive seriously compromises the credibility of any government that praises the benefits of gambling and declares that it has fully considered the

economic and social distortions caused by gambling. Government participation in gambling begs the question of who will assume responsibility for the public good and for the impact of the “gaming industry” on our society.

It is shameful to see governments promote gambling by spending millions of dollars in market research, product development, and aggressive advertising in order to stimulate artificially the level of demand.<sup>34</sup> Though such marketing methods are common in business, they raise serious conflict-of-interest questions when used by governments to encourage people to gamble, not to mention the ignominy of a practice that exploits the weaknesses of citizens by promoting greed disguised as a game.<sup>35</sup> It is not reasonably possible to reconcile the paradox of a government elected to fulfil its responsibility for protecting the common good with the active promotion of many forms of gambling as “engines of economic development” for communities, as sources of painless taxation, and as exciting entertainment for the public.<sup>36</sup>

(3) Governments have a responsibility to raise revenue in a fair and equitable manner. Gambling constitutes an unfair form of taxation in that it is regressive, unrelated to income or property, and drawn disproportionately from low-income people. Although it is true that individuals are not forced to participate in gambling, studies indicate that gambling attracts a disproportionate number of welfare recipients, pensioners and working poor, who see it as their only chance to end their financial worries.<sup>37</sup> Exacerbating further such exploitation and inequity is the fact that a larger proportion of the proceeds of gambling received by governments is directed toward social benefits desired by middle- and high-income groups than for needs of the poor.<sup>38</sup>

(4) The use of gambling to generate revenue for government budgets represents an evasion of responsibility to budget for expenditures in an appropriate, responsible manner and to tax society fairly for the services it needs. One Canadian journalist argues that:

When a government encourages citizens to gamble in order to produce revenue for its treasury, it is admitting defeat. It is saying that society is no longer able, in an open and democratic way, to tax itself for the services it wants. It is conceding that government has lost the moral authority to convince taxpayers that, if they want public goods such as roads and health care, they must be willing to pay for them. It is saying instead that the only way to pry more money from the electorate is to con it — to appeal to its cupidity rather than its sense of rational self-interest. So it encourages gambling and takes a hefty cut.<sup>39</sup>

Government involvement in gambling, therefore, raises serious questions both about our society's commitment to democratic principles in general, and about the integrity of governments in particular: if projects supported by gambling revenues are of real value then they should be paid for out of taxes which have been discussed and raised in a publicly accountable way rather than through exploitive means.<sup>40</sup> Ongoing state promotion may well deepen the levels of suspicion and cynicism many feel towards politicians and governments.<sup>41</sup>

## Recommendations for Governments

Legalized gambling injures the public interest. The direct government involvement in the gambling industry is reprehensible. As the impact of legalized gambling becomes more obvious, many Canadians are beginning to re-assess the gambling industry. This is a timely moment to press for political changes. As a result, EFC recommends that Canadian governments:

- enforce current legal restrictions on gambling in the *Criminal Code* and *Competition Act*;
- withdraw from all forms of direct involvement in gambling;
- regulate, restrict, and contain gambling as much as possible;
- prohibit the advertising of gambling opportunities;
- heavily tax both gambling businesses and winnings;
- assume responsibility, or assist in finding alternative sources of funding, for social services functions and the public support of certain cultural, educational and sports activities that depend on the proceeds of gambling;
- acknowledge the extent of the damage caused by compulsive gambling, and properly fund agencies and facilities dealing with problem gamblers and their families; and
- help develop alternative economic development opportunities for aboriginal communities.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1965 legal gambling was restricted to infrequent charity bingos and raffles, midway games of chance on the summer fair circuit, pari-mutuel wagering on horse races and friendly bets between individuals. The liberalization of gambling in Canada was made possible by two historic amendments to the *Criminal Code* of Canada. The first, effected in 1969, legalized lotteries if authorized by either the federal or provincial governments and broadened the terms and conditions of charity gambling. (The change was prompted by the desire on the part of the civic administration of Montreal to find a means for raising funds for the construction of Olympic installations.) The 1985 revision relegated lotteries exclusively to provincial jurisdictions. The provinces were also granted the authority to manage and operate mechanical gambling devices (see C. Campbell, "Gambling in Canada," in *Canadian Criminology: Perspectives on Crime and Criminality*, eds. M. Jackson and C. Griffiths [Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991]).

<sup>2</sup> "Betting on Casinos," *Maclean's*, 30 May 1994, 26. Of the entire amount gambled in Canada, about 38% goes to governments as revenue, approximately 47% is distributed as winnings, and 15% covers administration costs (Harold Jantz, "Gambling Mania Tests our Private and Public Faith," *ChristianWeek*, November 29, 1994, 8, 10).

<sup>3</sup> This was the warning given by President Clinton recently ("Legalized gambling faces US backlash," *Globe and Mail*, November 7, 1995, A15). A veritable mountain of statistics which demonstrates the phenomenal growth of the gambling industry in Canada and the United States within the last two decades: e.g., the Alberta Lottery Fund netted \$387 million in 1994, up from \$135 million two years prior ("A most unpopular cash cow," *Western Report*, December 12, 1994, 18). Total sales for the Atlantic Lottery Corporation in 1995-96 equaled \$717.8 million (*The Evening Telegram*, October 17, 1996, 41.) In 1995 the Ontario Lottery Corporation received nearly \$2 billion, up 3% from the year before ("Dear Mike, Don't Bet on Casinos," *Toronto Star*, November 13, 1995). In 1994, gamblers in the USA parted with more than \$484 billion, which is more than the gross national product of China, and it represents a 22% increase over the previous year! Concern is

mounting in the USA over the growing strength of the gambling industry's political lobby, donating in 1994 slightly less than the National Rifle Association and the United Auto Workers of America ("Gambling with the Future," *Toronto Star*, February 4, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> These criteria generally do not apply to the small-scale fund-raising efforts sometimes used by local charities and sports associations. If engaged in as a mere passing amusement or motivated by a generous desire to help a good cause in which there are no detrimental consequences to anyone, then participation should not be censured.

<sup>5</sup> The early church's opinions concerning gambling varied from mild disapproval (Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen) to vigorous denunciation (Apollonius and Cyprian of Carthage) (see David W.T. Brattston, "Gambling and Early Christianity," *Evangelical Baptist* [December 1994]: 16-17).

<sup>6</sup> It is ironic that many big-time winners often end up being big-time losers. Sudden large gains in wealth tend to destroy the moral fibre of people and, as a result, many winners spend their windfall within a short period of time (John H. Redekop, "Lotteries can't be redeemed by tawdry claims," *ChristianWeek*, March 6, 1990, 9).

<sup>7</sup> "Gambling and the NT," in *Report by the Synodical Committee on Gambling*, Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, June 1991, 2, 3.

<sup>8</sup> The majority of studies place their estimates between 4% and 6% (see comparative chart in *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Alberta: Final Report* [Edmonton: Prepared for Alberta Lotteries and Gaming by Wynn Resources, 1994], 18; and Saskatchewan Health Profile, December 1994, 1).

<sup>9</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 615-618. Three terms are often used interchangeably in gambling literature: compulsive gambling, pathological gambling and problem gambling. Some, however, make a distinction between the more specific matter of pathological (compulsive) gambling and the more general area of problem gambling which could describe any form of gambling behaviour that negatively affects family, personal or vocational pursuits. Pathological gambling is behaviour characterized by at least five of the following:

1. A preoccupation with reliving past gambling experiences, studying a gambling system, planning the next gambling venture, or finding ways to get money.
  2. The need to gamble with more and more money in order to achieve the desired level of excitement.
  3. Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
  4. Restlessness or irritability when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
  5. Using gambling as a way to escape from problems or intolerable feelings.
  6. After losing money gambling, often returning another day to get even ("chasing" losses).
  7. Lying to family, employer, or therapist to protect and conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
  8. Committing illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement to finance gambling.
  9. Jeopardizing or losing a significant relationship, marriage, education, job, or career because of gambling.
  10. Needing another individual to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation produced by gambling (a "bail-out").
- <sup>10</sup> A major difference between male and female compulsive gamblers is that men have often had a big win early in their gambling careers which makes them feel invincible and starts them fantasizing about winning consistently. Many women have never had a big win; they gamble to escape overwhelming problems in their home life, in their past, or in their relationships (Garry J. Smith, "Compulsive Gambling: General Issues, Treatments, and Policy Considerations," A report prepared for Alberta Lotteries and Gaming, February 1992, 9).
- <sup>11</sup> See the extensive body of research compiled by R. Volberg and H. Steadman (e.g., "Refining Prevalence Estimates of Pathological Gambling," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 145 [1988]: 502-505; and "Accurately Depicting Pathological Gamblers: Policy and Treatment Implications," *Journal of Gambling Studies* 8 [1992]: 401-412).
- <sup>12</sup> "Stakes high in youth gambling, expert says," *Globe and Mail*, September 29, 1995. John Hartley, a United Church minister who has been an outspoken critic of gambling, stated: "We believe we are handing to the next generation not only a burden of national debt, but also a destructive appetite for instant economic success by methods that undercut a healthy work ethic and profit from the credulity and weakness of citizens" ("A Christian voice against government gambling," *ChristianWeek*, March 6, 1990, 9). The Alberta Council on Problem Gambling claims that 96% of compulsive gamblers started gambling before the age of 14: if the number of adolescents gambling is on the increase, one could reasonably expect a corresponding increase in the problem of compulsive gambling. Other studies show that the children of parents who gamble are particularly at risk (David Hewitt and Darlene Auger, "Firewatch on Aboriginal Adolescent Gambling" [Edmonton: Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute, 1995], 35).
- <sup>13</sup> K. Winters, R. Stinchfield and J. Fulkerson, "Patterns and Characteristics of Adolescent Gambling," *Journal of Gambling Studies* 9 (1993b): 371-386; see also David Hewitt, and Darlene Auger, "Firewatch on Aboriginal Adolescent Gambling" (Edmonton: Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute, 1995).
- <sup>14</sup> Smith, "Compulsive Gambling: General Issues, Treatments, and Policy Considerations," 56.
- <sup>15</sup> Robert Goodman, "The Luck Business: The Devastating Consequences and Broken Promises of America's Gambling Explosion" (New York: Free Press, 1995).
- <sup>16</sup> "And They Cast Lots," Brief presented to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Legislative Assembly of Ontario, by the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada, Peace, Justice and Concern Committee, Kitchener, ON, August 1993, 4.
- <sup>17</sup> *Toronto Star*, July 7, 1993, A6.
- <sup>18</sup> Cited in "Gambling with the Future," *Toronto Star*, February 4, 1996, F6.
- <sup>19</sup> During the 1980s the increase in Canadians buying lottery tickets effected a decline in charitable donations on the average to below 1% (D. McCormack Smyth, "Government Lotteries: Corruption of Canadian Life," The Office of Church in Society, Division of Mission in Canada, for the Ad Hoc Inter-Church Committee on Gambling and Lotteries, United Church of Canada, November 1981, 2).
- <sup>20</sup> Of 43,000 casino jobs created in Atlantic City, only 11,000 (25%) went to local residents (*Toronto Star*, July 5, 1993, A1).
- <sup>21</sup> *Toronto Star*, February 6, 1993, B4.
- <sup>22</sup> "And They Cast Lots," 4.
- <sup>23</sup> A report written for the Government of Canada states, "Wherever casinos are found, they are inseparable from organized criminal activities. Virtually every study . . . points out that casino gaming, whether illegal or legal, encourages organized criminal activity . . . if a jurisdiction is not willing to accept this involvement it should not get involved in legalized gambling" (Margaret E. Beare and Howard Hampton, *Legalized Gambling: An Overview* [Solicitor General Canada, 1984], 16, 90, 92, 110). See also "And They Cast Lots," 5-6.
- <sup>24</sup> See summaries of several studies included in "Submission on the Casino Proposal For the Edmonton Convention Centre," Presented to the Alberta Gaming Commission by Citizens for Public Justice, December 1986.
- <sup>25</sup> R. Lindsey, "Where is Canada's Gambling Mania Taking Us?" Unpublished paper, April 28, 1992, 2.
- <sup>26</sup> Bronwyn Drainie, "Gambling on the arts: the view from Alberta," *Globe and Mail*, March 7, 1996, C1.
- <sup>27</sup> Cited in Harold Jantz, "Gambling Mania Tests Our Private and Public Faith," *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, July 15, 1994, 5.
- <sup>28</sup> Psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman explain the way individuals make decisions involving very small probabilities: people have great difficulty, they argue, in assessing very unlikely events. In these situations, people rely on "heuristics" to help them decide the likelihood of a particular event. One of these is based on knowledge of actual occurrences of the event: a person who can think of a time when the event happened is more likely to exaggerate the probability of its happening. Advertising that offers vivid examples of winning and provides steady publicity of actual winners increases one's subjective sense of the probability of winning. Despite facing actual odds as small as 1 in 14 million, players can nevertheless visualize winning the jackpot. The strategy of accentuating the latter and ignoring the former serves to feed an ongoing hope of winning (cited in Charles T. Clotfelter and Philip J. Cook, "Taking Lotteries Seriously," unpublished paper, March 1989, 13-14).
- <sup>29</sup> Clotfelter and Cook, "Taking Lotteries Seriously," 14.
- <sup>30</sup> See "Gambling with aboriginal futures: The Saskatchewan Government pushes casinos as an answer to Indian problems," *Alberta Report*, 11 December 1995, 16.
- <sup>31</sup> "Casino Mecca in Mayor's Cards," *Edmonton Journal*, October 24, 1996, A1, A12.
- <sup>32</sup> The decision to refuse monies generated by gambling has been made by the Mennonite Central Committee. One United Church of Canada report indicates that people in native ministries have specifically requested churches not to use such monies even for the greater good which the church believes it could do ("Church Use of Lottery-Generated Funds: Review of Policy," Office of Church in Society, United Church of Canada, November 22-24, 1992).
- <sup>33</sup> Contrary to notions current in North America, the maximizing of national wealth and raising the standard of living are not the primary responsibilities of government.

<sup>34</sup> Consider, e.g., that the Manitoba government budgeted \$500,000 to treat gambling addictions in 1994, and had already spent \$600,000 by May 1994 to advertise gambling (“Social cost of casinos left to chance,” *Globe and Mail*, May 13, 1994, A4). See also Lindsey, “Where Is Canada’s Gambling Mania Taking Us?” 3.

<sup>35</sup> Smyth, “Government Lotteries: Corruption of Canadian Life,” 1.

<sup>36</sup> Garry Smith, a prominent critic of gambling, suggests if providing entertainment options for its citizens were really the primary reason for governments to be involved in the industry, then it would be treated like other recreational outlets, much like “provincial parks, campsites, museums and golf courses. They would amend their policies to allow wagering with more generous odds; they would protect improvident bettors, and not try to stimulate the gambling market” (“The real gambling addict: government”).

<sup>37</sup> F. Vaillancourt and J. Grignon, “Canadian Lotteries as Taxes: Revenues and Incidence,” *Canadian Tax Journal* 36, No. 2 (March-April 1988): 369-388; John R. Livernois, “The Redistributive Effects of Lotteries: Evidence from Canada,” *Public Finance Quarterly* 15 (July 1987): 339-351; and M.O. Borg, P.M. Mason, and S.L. Shapiro, “The Incidence of Taxes on Casino Gambling: Exploiting the Tired and Poor,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* (July 1991).

Proponents of legalized gambling consider the idea of outlawing gambling in order to protect people as inappropriately paternalistic: after all, playing the lottery is an interesting, pleasurable diversion for a great many adults, and how is one to judge whether players are wasting their money or depriving themselves and their families of more important commodities?

<sup>38</sup> Lindsey, “Where is Canada’s Gambling Mania Taking Us?” 3.

Proponents are beginning to resist the accusation that gambling preys on the poor and unsophisticated by suggesting that some of the newer games which require a higher degree of skill (e.g., sports lotteries) are most popular among middle to high-income males (“Going for Broke,” *Macleans*, January 20, 1992, 35).

<sup>39</sup> *Toronto Star*, March 20, 1993, D5.

<sup>40</sup> Smyth, “Government Lotteries: Corruption of Canadian Life,” 3. Dedicating lottery revenues to some noble cause tends to obscure for some the ethical questions involved of how the money was raised. The end does not justify the means. If it did, we should be advocating that governments raise still more revenue by legalizing the sale of heroin or prostitution, and by advertising the sale of liquor.

<sup>41</sup> Smyth outlines some additional, related concerns: “Government lotteries function as a means for increasing bureaucratic control over the lives of individuals. In democratic societies it is assumed that culture springs up and flourishes through the exercise of individual and group initiative and creativity. Government control of large sums of money raised through lotteries and the disbursement of such funds in accordance with partisan political interests, and without the full scrutiny of the Legislature, reflect increasing state control of our cultural life. This is contrary to basic democratic principles” (“Government Lotteries: Corruption of Canadian Life,” 2).