

# OUR LOSS

The risks of gambling with  
our communities



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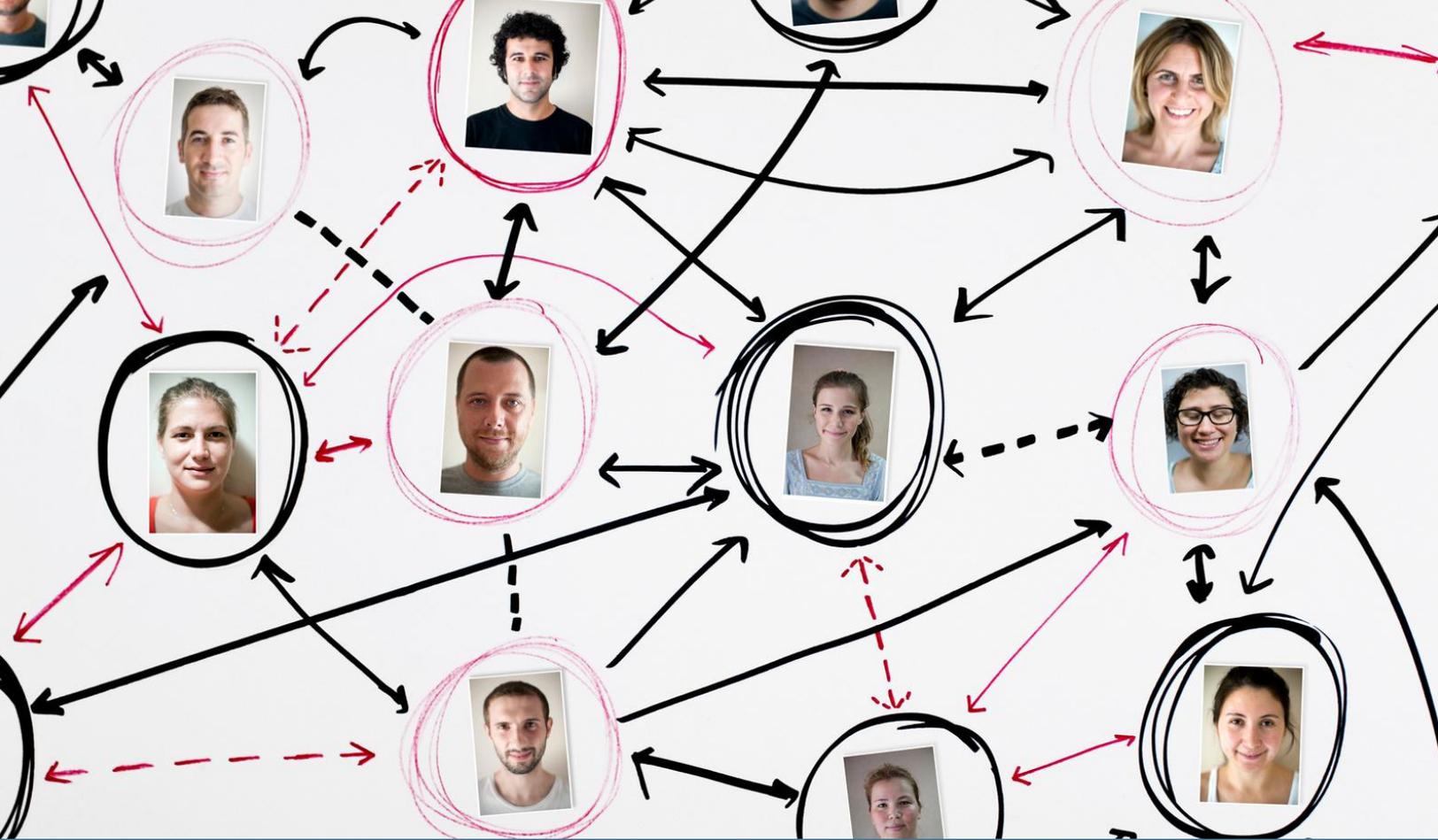
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Graphic Design: Heidi Kalyani  
Editorial Advising: GRINS Board of Directors  
Qualitative Data Collecting: Sophia Bush Anderson

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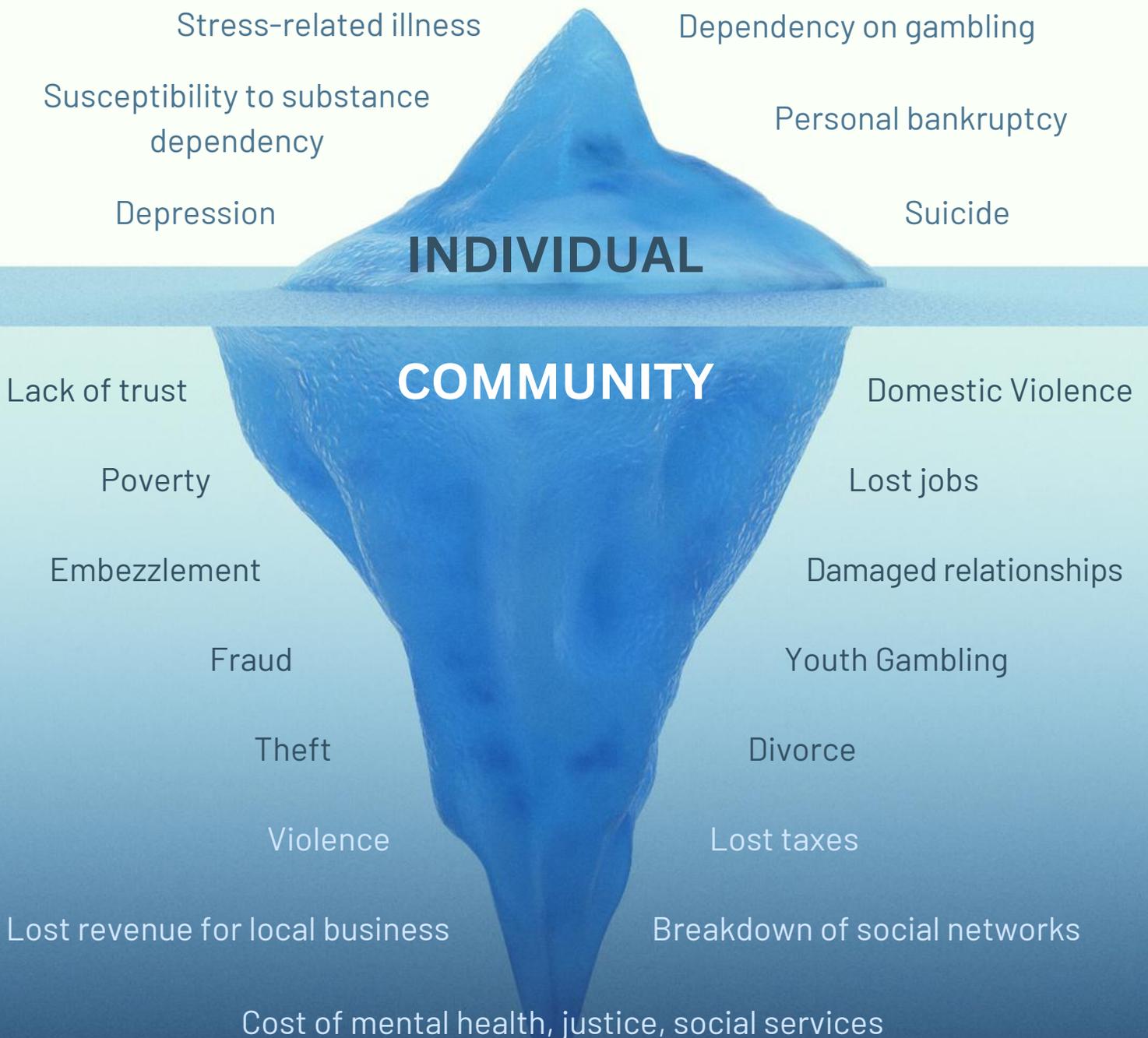
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# WE ALL HAVE A PROBLEM WITH GAMBLING

Gambling harms do not discriminate. They infiltrate every facet of life, affecting the young and the old, the affluent and the underprivileged. As we delve into the complexities of this issue, it becomes evident that gambling impacts more than individuals; it is a community problem.

# Individual gambling harms are just the tip of the iceberg.



In these pages, we illuminate the far-reaching impacts of gambling in Nova Scotia, drawing from the genuine experiences of local people.

We explore how gambling affects institutions, business, youth, families, and individuals. We discuss the role of VLTs in perpetuating gambling dependency. We examine the hidden costs that gambling imposes on our communities, particularly in terms of health and social stability. We challenge the myth that gambling has economic benefits.

We believe that by understanding the full scope of gambling's impact, we can work together to shift the gambling culture that destabilizes our communities, and develop effective strategies for prevention, support, and recovery for those who are harmed by it.

This document is not an academic exercise; it is a call to action for all members of our community, whether you are a policymaker, business owner, educator, parent, or concerned citizen. We hope this overview will equip you with the knowledge and tools to make a difference.

Join us on this journey as we explore the challenges and seek solutions. Together, we can address the root causes of gambling harms and build a healthier, more resilient Nova Scotia.





## We are not “anti-gambling”.



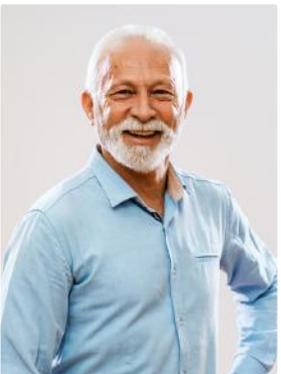
Rather, our goal is to provide insight, promote dialogue, and inspire action to mitigate the harms associated with it. Our vision is a future where the culture of gambling is transparent, allowing people to make informed decisions about the risks they are taking.



We hope this document will help achieve these objectives and strengthen our communities.



Stigma around gambling harm remains prevalent, causing many Nova Scotians to hesitate in speaking out. For this reason, the names of our interviewees have not been disclosed. We look forward to a time when people can speak their truths openly and be received with understanding. It is crucial to have conversations about gambling and its impacts.



We hope the insights shared in this document will encourage you to engage in these important discussions.





# **GAMBLING AND INSTITUTIONS**

**In Nova Scotia, gambling harms extend beyond the personal to affect families, communities, and other institutions such as churches, schools, and charities.**

**Here we examine these effects, advocating for community support, financial safeguards, and a cultural shift towards greater awareness and transparency to mitigate the consequences of gambling on our communities.**

# GAMBLING WITH YOUR FAMILY

Gambling harms do not only impact individuals; they also cast a long shadow over families. The repercussions of gambling harms ripple through families, disrupting financial stability, affecting the emotional and physical health of family members, and undermining the foundation of trust and communication within the home.

## Everyone Pays

One of the most immediate impacts of gambling on families is financial instability. It can lead people to deplete savings accounts, max out credit cards, or take out high-interest loans, putting their family's financial security at risk. In tight-knit Nova Scotia communities, this financial fallout can also affect the family's ability to meet communal obligations or participate in community events.



**Children may feel the stigma associated with their parent's actions, leading to social withdrawal or behavioural issues.**



## **Impact on Children**

Children are particularly vulnerable to a parent's gambling. They may experience neglect or emotional absence as the parent diverts family time and resources to gambling.

Children may feel the stigma associated with their parent's actions, leading to social withdrawal or behavioural issues. The instability can also affect their performance in school, as stress at home translates into difficulty concentrating or lack of participation in activities.



## Health Consequences

The stress of dealing with gambling can lead to health problems for the whole family, including hypertension, insomnia, and anxiety. The emotional toll can also lead to physical symptoms, as well as triggering or exacerbating underlying health issues.

## The Rollercoaster

Depression is a common consequence for people who gamble. They may feel overwhelmed by guilt and remorse after the thrill wears off. For family members, the constant worry, the stress on finances, and the emotional roller coaster of hope and despair can lead to feelings of helplessness.

## Shame, Secrets, and Isolation

One of the most damaging aspects of gambling harms is its culture of shame and secrecy. Families often feel compelled to hide the problem, leading to isolation

as families pull away from social connections out of fear that their secret will be exposed.

## Direct Harms

Gambling can lead directly to domestic violence; a police officer recently reported responding to a domestic violence call provoked by one of the parents spending the family rent money on VLTs. These gambling impacts go unreported in case files, thus bypassing the notice of policymakers.

## Pervasive Impact

Financial pressures, emotional and physical health issues, the effect on children, and the shame and secrecy that often accompany gambling harms can compromise family dynamics and community relationships. Addressing these issues requires community support, financial counselling, and professional help for those who wish to stop gambling.

# THE EDUCATION GAP

## Are Casino Nights in our Schools 'Safe'?

School events in Nova Scotia, such as 'Safe Prom' casino nights, inadvertently expose students to gambling risks. Designed to provide safe entertainment, these events often normalize risky behaviours by introducing young attendees to casino-style games.

The vibrant atmosphere, complete with flashing lights and competitive games, can leave a lasting impression, leading students to associate gambling with fun and excitement.

## Gambling Awareness: Not on the Curriculum

There is a lack of education on the risks of gambling in schools. This leaves students ill-equipped to understand the nature of gambling and unaware of its potential for long-term financial, social and psychological harms. The absence of proper education makes it difficult for students to distinguish between harmless recreation and risky behaviours.

## Information and Alternatives

Schools could provide information about the potential risks of gambling. And choosing alternative forms of entertainment for school events would also be beneficial. With these steps, schools in Nova Scotia can create safer environments and promote healthier attitudes towards gambling.





# BROKEN TRUST

## How Gambling Harms Undermine Community Organizations and Institutions

Gambling harm is not merely a personal crisis; it reaches into the heart of communities and can severely undermine trust in key institutions like the Church. For example, if an individual takes Church funds to support their gambling they do more than commit financial crimes; they erode the foundational trust that binds communities together.

### Vulnerable Institutions

Organizations and institutions often operate on principles of trust and goodwill, depending on donations and the voluntary services of their members to manage operations and support community projects. When someone within these institutions is lured by gambling products, the temptation to embezzle funds can become overpowering.

The pattern typically involves individuals who start gambling casually, only to fall deeper into debt. As their need for more gambling funds increases, they may begin to misuse funds entrusted to them. The discovery of such embezzlement cases shatters the faith of the community and undermines the institution's integrity.

Members may begin to question the management of their contributions and the oversight mechanisms in place. This scepticism can lead to reduced financial support for these institutions, which in turn affects their ability to serve the community.

### Preventive Measures and Recovery

Some institutions have addressed these challenges by implementing stricter financial controls to ensure greater transparency in their operations. Additionally, offering support to individuals struggling with gambling, including counselling and treatment referrals, can help prevent problems from escalating. Shifting the culture of stigma around gambling is an essential factor in creating a safe atmosphere to talk about gambling problems.

Institutions can also work on rebuilding broken trust. This involves open communication with their communities about the steps being taken to prevent future incidents and how they plan to rectify any damage done. Reintegration of the individual can also be a powerful testimony to the institution's commitment to its values.

# GAMBLING WITH CHARITIES

Using gambling to raise money can negatively impact charitable institutions and communities.

When charities use gambling to fundraise, it makes gambling seem normal and acceptable. This can make people less aware of the potential dangers and more likely to see it as just a fun activity.

## Taking With One Hand

Not all the money raised through gambling goes to charity. A lot of it gets eaten up by costs, fees, and prizes, so the charity ends up with less than you might think.

## The Spirit of Giving, Undermined

Fundraising through gambling shifts the focus from helping others to winning something for yourself. This can lead to charities competing with each other to offer bigger and better prizes, rather than focusing on the good work they do.

## When Charity Erodes

Ongoing gambling events, like "Chase the Ace," can cause problems in the community. In one Cape Breton community the excitement around the weekly draw disrupted local businesses. People spent less money locally, gave less to other charities, and some even used their social assistance checks to buy tickets. In the end, an outsider won the jackpot, leaving the community to deal with the negative impacts.

Gambling like this undermines the values and trust of the organizations involved. It's important to think about these effects and look for other, more positive ways to raise money.





# LOSING AT GAMBLING

## The Long-Term Implications of Gambling Harms

Gambling, often portrayed as harmless entertainment, can escalate into a harmful activity with negative impacts on families, health, careers, mental wellbeing, and the community at large. These long-term effects shed light on the threats gambling can hold for the province and its institutions.

## Health and Mental Wellbeing

Gambling harms are strongly correlated with a range of health issues, both physical and psychological. People who are harmed by gambling often experience hypertension and insomnia, depression and anxiety. The stress of unmanageable debt can exacerbate these conditions. And oft-used coping mechanisms such as substance abuse pose additional long-term health risks.

## Careers Compromised

Gambling harms can include decreased productivity, absenteeism, and strained relationships with colleagues and employers. This may even lead to job loss or career derailment. And the economic impacts can extend beyond the individual to the broader economy, as affected families have less disposable income to contribute to local economies.

## Community and Societal Effects

Gambling harms can strain social resources and services. Increased demand for mental health services, social welfare, and debt counselling place pressure on community resources. It can also contribute to broader social issues, including poverty, homelessness, and crime.

## Putting Well-being Above Revenue Generation

Gambling generates revenue for the province but also generates a wide variety of personal, familial and community harms. Addressing this issue would require stricter regulations on gambling, better educational programs about the risks involved, and a cultural shift in how gambling is perceived within the community.

As Nova Scotia continues to reckon with these challenges, we can foster a healthier, more informed approach to gambling that prioritizes the well-being of its citizens over revenue generation.





## **'WE ARE FAILING OUR COMMUNITIES'** **The Addiction Therapist's Story**

*Gambling addiction, the most severe form of gambling harm other than suicide, profoundly impacts individuals and families. A Nova Scotia addiction therapist says it wreaks havoc on mental health, relationships, and jobs, yet stigma keeps many from seeking help. She urges policymakers, healthcare providers, and communities to take a compassionate approach and tackle this hidden crisis in an empathic way.*

Her narrative unveils the complexity of gambling addiction, emphasizing its pervasive and insidious nature. **"Gambling addiction isn't just a financial drain; it's a destroyer of lives and communities,"** she asserts, pointing to a series of deep-seated issues aligned with gambling that go beyond visible symptoms.

The addiction therapist's insights also reveal the lack of awareness and understanding about gambling harms among the public and health professionals alike. She explains the critical gaps in services and support for those struggling with gambling addiction, underscoring the inadequacy of current responses. **"We are failing our communities by not addressing this issue with the seriousness it deserves,"** she states, emphasizing the urgent need for a strategic and well-supported approach.

She recounts personal stories from her practice, where individuals' lives have been drastically altered by gambling. These serve as powerful illustrations of the broader impact of gambling on individuals' mental health, employment, and relationships. **"The hidden repercussions of gambling are often more devastating than the immediate financial losses,"** she notes, highlighting the profound emotional and psychological toll on individuals and their families.

She goes on to shed light on the societal stigma associated with gambling addiction, which often prevents individuals from seeking help. She calls for a shift in perception, from viewing gambling addiction as a personal failure to recognizing it as a complex issue that requires community-wide engagement and empathy. **"De-stigmatizing gambling addiction is crucial for recovery and prevention,"** she advocates, suggesting that increased public awareness and education are key to changing the narrative around gambling harms.

**"The hidden repercussions of gambling are often more devastating than the immediate financial losses."**

**- NOVA SCOTIA ADDICTION THERAPIST**

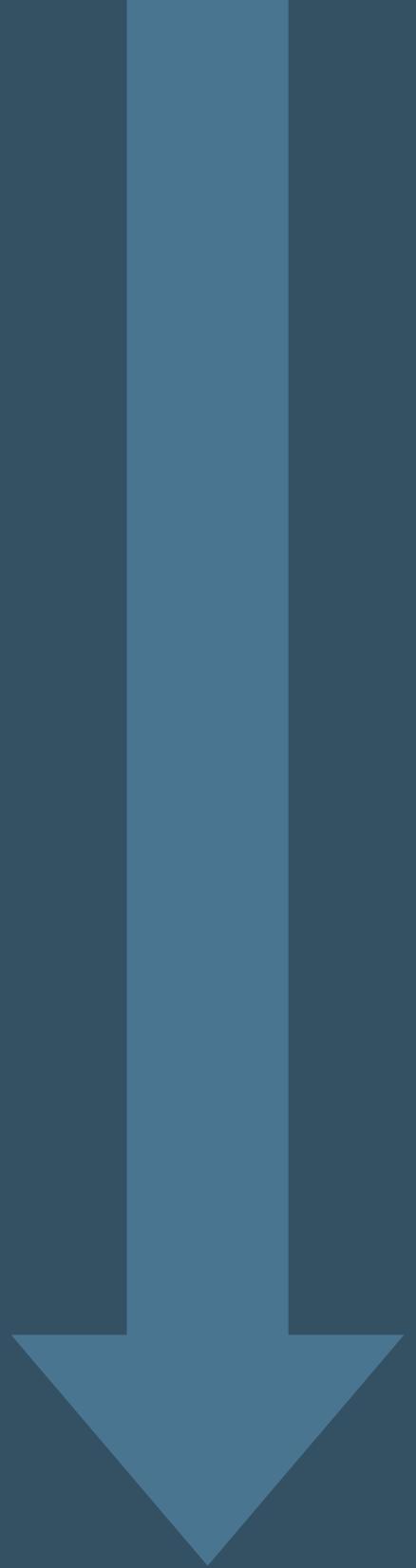
## **GAMBLING AND INSTITUTIONS**

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# **TAKEAWAYS**

**Gambling harm in Nova Scotia extends beyond the individual to impact families, communities and institutions. It disrupts financial stability, erodes trust within families, and undermines foundational community structures, including schools and churches.**

**Addressing these issues requires a unified approach involving community support, enhanced awareness, financial counselling and a cultural movement towards transparency. By fostering a supportive and informed environment, we can mitigate the consequences of gambling harms and rebuild the trust and integrity of our community and its institutions.**



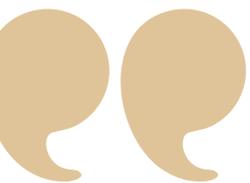


# GAMBLING AND YOUTH

**The part of our brain that helps manage risk assessment and impulse control isn't fully developed until around age 25, making young people particularly vulnerable to gambling risks.**

**This vulnerability is further exacerbated by increasingly easy access to online betting and its normalization through social media. The lines between gaming and gambling blur, making it hard to see when casual play turns problematic.**

**Recognizing these early harms and understanding how gambling products manipulate behaviour is crucial. By raising awareness of these patterns, we can encourage positive changes before serious damage is done.**



## **'GAMBLING ADDICTION ISN'T JUST ABOUT LOSING MONEY, IT'S ABOUT LOSING FUTURES.'**

### **The Youth Leader's Story**

*In an interview with a program leader for a youth outreach initiative in Nova Scotia, the undercurrents of gambling harms among the region's youth are brought to light, revealing a troubling issue. **"Gambling addiction isn't just about losing money; it's about losing futures,"** she explains, emphasising the profound effects on young lives and community health.*

She reveals that while gambling might not be the most vocal issue compared to substance abuse, its impact is nonetheless severe.

She shares the story of a young individual whose life was disrupted by gambling, weaving a narrative that reflects the complex interplay of mental health issues and addiction. **"It's not an easy problem... it still crops up in their daily life and affects their ability to manage a successful life,"** she notes, pointing out the long-term struggles that people who gamble face even after seeking help.

Her account provides a stark contrast to the common perception of gambling as a harmless pastime, instead revealing an issue that can entangle youth in a web of secrecy and despair. She stresses the covert nature of gambling problems, explaining how the issue is **"easily hidden and not as socially acceptable"** among youth, making it even harder to identify and address.

The conversation also touches upon the broader implications of gambling in the community, lamenting the scarcity of discussions about gambling impacts compared to other social problems. **"Gambling is everywhere, and it's not just about the money—it's about the triggers and the availability that make recovery so challenging,"** she adds, reflecting insights from addiction specialists.

Moreover, she highlights the importance of resources and support systems that are attuned to the unique challenges posed by gambling dependency. She points to the need for specialized training for outreach workers and better integration of gambling into the dialogue about youth mental health and wellness.

Her insights from the front lines of youth outreach provide a worrying glimpse into the hidden crisis of gambling harms in Nova Scotia. The interview serves as a call to action for more comprehensive support structures and greater awareness to protect and empower the province's youth against the dangers of gambling.

**"Gambling is everywhere, and it's not just about the money—it's about the triggers and the availability that make recovery so challenging."**

**- NOVA SCOTIA  
YOUTH LEADER**

# THE GATEWAY DRUG

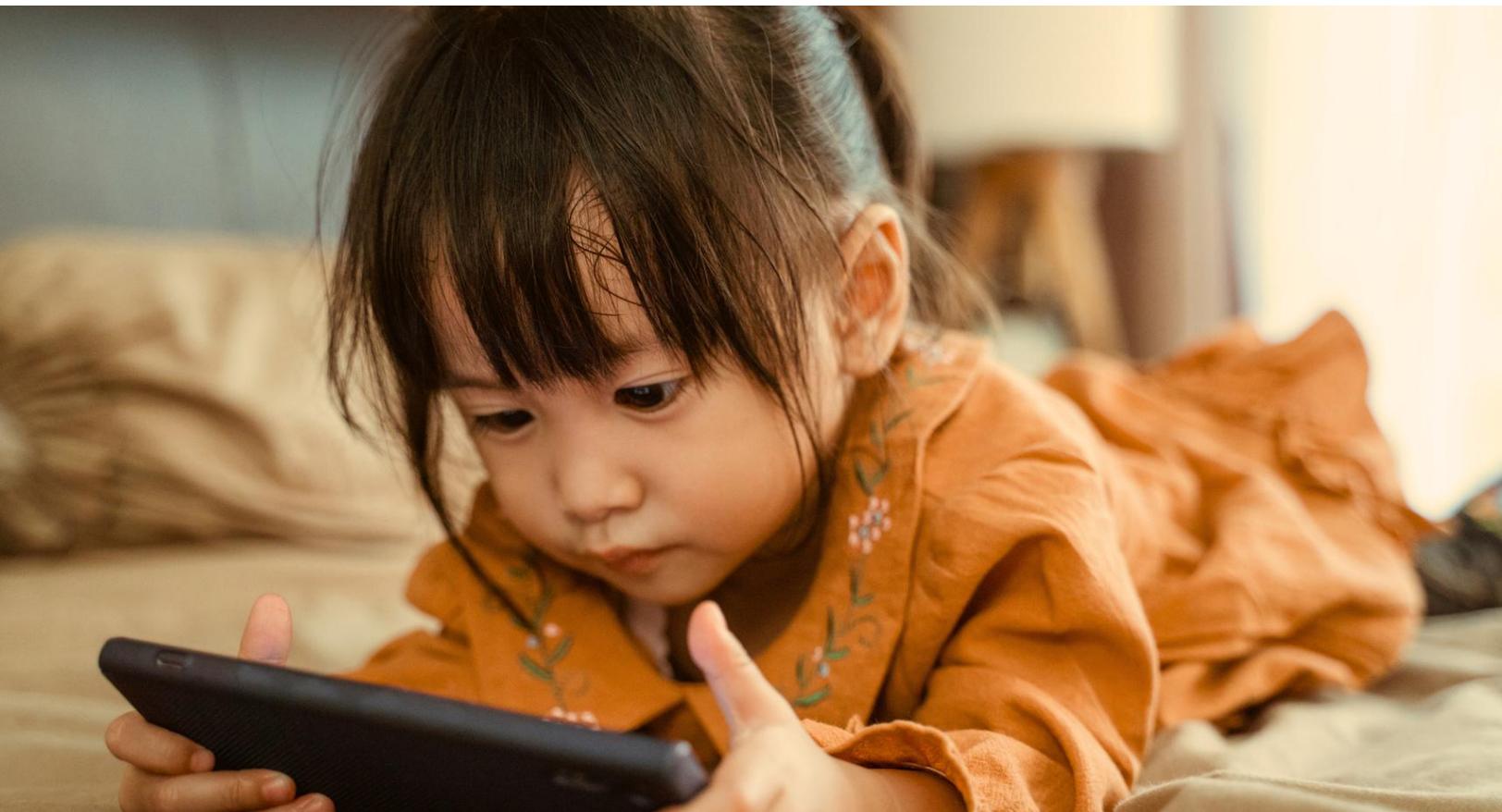
## How Cell Phones, Social Media, and the Gamification of the Internet Can Predispose Children to Gambling Dependency

These technologies, integral to the daily lives of many children, subtly foster behaviours and habits that mimic and encourage gambling. The immersion of young users in environments where risk-taking, instant gratification and reward-seeking are normalized can potentially lay the groundwork for gambling problems later in life.

### Cell Phones: Constant Connectivity and Instant Gratification

Cell phones have fundamentally altered how children interact with the world, providing unending stimulation through apps and games that offer instant rewards. These rewards, often in the form of points, new levels or social recognition, stimulate dopamine release, similar to gambling.

The constant availability of these experiences teaches children to expect and strive for immediate pleasure, a mentality that aligns well with the principles of gambling.



## **Social Media: Social Rewards and Comparison**

Social media platforms enhance this effect by adding social rewards into the mix, such as likes, shares, and comments that serve as public validation of a child's social standing. These platforms often use algorithms designed to maximize engagement, offering content that is increasingly stimulating and interactive.

This dynamic can be seen as a form of psychological conditioning where children learn to associate their self-worth and happiness with external validation, mirroring the reward-seeking behaviour seen in gambling.

## **Gamification: Risk-Taking Behaviour in Digital Spaces**

The gamification of Internet experiences, where non-gaming activities involve game-like elements, further contributes to the risk. Educational apps, shopping rewards and even fitness trackers use points, badges, leaderboards and other gaming strategies to encourage continuous and increased engagement.

Such features teach children the thrill of taking risks and achieving rewards based on chance or repetitive actions, closely mimicking gambling dynamics.

## **The Link to Gambling Harms**

Video games, particularly those featuring in-game purchases or loot boxes, offer rewards at random, much like a slot machine. This phenomenon is often referred to as the "gamblification of gaming." Simply put, if gambling is defined as "risking something of

value on an uncertain outcome," then purchasing a loot box with unknown content certainly fits this definition.

As children grow accustomed to these dynamics, the psychological framework—thrill-seeking, risk-taking, and reward-chasing— becomes embedded, making them more vulnerable to gambling-related harms. Understanding how gambling products manipulate behaviour like this is crucial to addressing the issue.

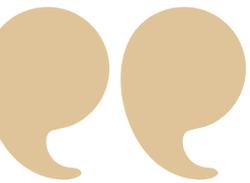
## **Mitigating the Risks**

We encourage parents and educators to become more vigilant and proactive in discussing these digital environments with children. Setting boundaries on screen time and explaining the mechanics behind digital rewards can help children develop a healthier relationship with technology.

Regulation is also necessary to address how games and social media exploit psychological mechanisms and vulnerabilities. Policies that require transparent labelling of games with gambling-like mechanics could mitigate these risks.

By understanding the ways in which cell phones, social media, and the gamification of the Internet can predispose children to financial harms, mental health issues and dependency, we can help safeguard youth.





## **'YOU GET TIRED FROM ALL THE THINGS YOU LOSE' The Young Gambler's Story**

*A young Nova Scotian's journey into dependency began innocently enough. **"I was introduced at 10 or 11 to gambling through my aunts and uncles,"** he reminisced. It started with scratch tickets on birthdays and card games during family gatherings. The allure of winning without effort soon took a powerful hold on him. **"Winning something without working for it was addictive... It shot into my bloodstream like heroin."***

By 16, he discovered poker, and the game was rapidly gaining social acceptance. **"I am a super competitive guy,"** he explained, noting that the blend of competition and social acceptance drove his pursuit.

His first major win of \$20,000 playing online poker at 18 was mired in controversy due to the "Black Friday" Full Tilt Poker scandal, delaying his access to the prize until he turned 19.

His 19th birthday marked a significant turning point when he first stepped into a casino. **"I arrived black-out drunk, and they turned me away, but I was back by first light."** This event began a decade-long period where he never went more than 48 hours without gambling. The stakes grew higher, and the losses more severe. **"Poker was my initiation, but blackjack was where I got into big trouble."**

His addiction led to severe personal and financial consequences. **"I lost close to \$1M in 10 years,"** he reflected on his losses, which included the woman he was going to marry, his childhood best friend, a million-dollar business, and the strain on his relationship with his parents. The cost of his addiction extended beyond money. **"I don't think I ever gambled sober. It makes you fearless,"** he admitted, underscoring the dangerous combination of gambling and alcohol.

The darker side of his addiction was relentless. **"I've been suicidal three different times,"** he confessed, illustrating the profound mental health struggles he faced. His compulsion was driven by the thrill and the fleeting sense of success. **"When you win you look like a boss. There's something about that feeling,"** he described, highlighting the deceptive allure of victory.

Recovery was a long and arduous process. **"You get tired from all of the things you lose,"** he said, acknowledging the toll gambling had taken on his life and relationships. Despite recognizing his addiction, he struggled with the stigma. **"I think it's healthiest to call it an addiction but have resisted it at different times because it feels dirty."** The pervasive nature of gambling advertisements made recovery even more challenging. **"Every second ad anywhere on the Internet is about gambling,"** he noted, reflecting on the constant temptation he faced. Internet advertising algorithms further compounded this exposure.

His story is a testament to the destructive power of gambling addiction but also to the possibility of redemption. He credited his recovery to the unwavering support of his parents and a few critical people. **"The unending support. Unconditional love."** He has since channelled his experiences into empathy and wisdom. **"All the money in the world won't make you happy,"** he concluded, having learned the hard way that true fulfillment comes from within and the relationships we nurture.

His journey serves as a powerful reminder of the dangers of gambling addiction and the resilience required to overcome it. **"Now I can look in the mirror and say 'I'm f-ing proud of that guy,'"** he said, reflecting on the hard-won pride and peace he has found in recovery.

**"I lost close to \$1M in 10 years."**

**- NOVA SCOTIA YOUNG GAMBLER**

# WHEN FUN TURNS TO HARM

## How Online Betting is Hooking the Next Generation

The shift from traditional gambling venues to digital platforms like betting apps and websites has dramatically lowered barriers to entry, embedding gambling in everyday digital interactions. This change makes gambling seem harmless, blurring the lines between gaming and betting.

## Impact of Advertising on Youth Gambling

Advertisements flood social media platforms, using dynamic visuals and celebrity endorsements to portray gambling as an exciting and rewarding activity. This continuous exposure can shape young people's perceptions, while increasing the likelihood of participation.

## Psychological and Social Effects

Online sports betting is enticing due to its speed and the instant gratification of winning, which can be especially captivating for youth. This fast-paced nature can encourage repeated betting, potentially leading to serious financial losses or to habit formation.

The social aspect of online betting, where betting is seen as a form of social interaction among peers and is often promoted by influencers, further normalizes this activity and reduces perceived risks.

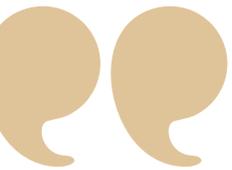
## From Casual Betting to Harmful Use

The progression from casual to compulsive betting can be subtle, with no clear warning signs. Young people who bet may start chasing losses or betting beyond their means, leading to significant financial, emotional, and social issues.

## Prevention/Support Strategies

Addressing this issue requires educational programs in schools that highlight the risks of gambling and challenge the glamorous media portrayals of betting. It is also crucial to improve access to resources for youth who have become harmfully involved with gambling, ensuring they are aware of available help.





## **‘OUR CLIENTS FIND THEMSELVES GRAPPLING WITH GAMBLING ADDICTION MUCH MORE FREQUENTLY’**

### **The Neurodivergency Advocate’s Story**

*In a conversation with a coach for neurodivergent individuals, a significant issue comes to light—gambling addiction within Nova Scotia's neurodivergent community.*

His organization is dedicated to supporting individuals with neurological differences, such as ADHD, where impulsivity is often a challenge. This trait significantly heightens vulnerability to gambling addictions. He explains, **"Our clients, particularly those prone to impulsivity, find themselves grappling with gambling much more frequently. 'It starts small but can quickly spiral into severe problems.'"**

**“We need a comprehensive strategy that includes education, community support, and access to specialized services.”**

**- NOVA SCOTIA  
NEURODIVERGENCY  
ADVOCATE**

This link between impulsivity and gambling highlights a crucial need for targeted interventions that address the unique aspects of neurodivergence.

The increasing prevalence of online gambling complicates these challenges, offering instant accessibility and thus appealing to the impulsive tendencies of some neurodivergent individuals.

The privacy afforded by digital platforms allows these habits to develop largely unnoticed until they reach critical levels. **“Online gambling exacerbates these issues, providing an easy outlet for impulsive behaviours that can be hidden from view,”** he notes.

In response, he provides specialized coaching and support tailored to the neurodivergent community, focusing on managing impulsivity and preventing the escalation of gambling habits.

However, he stresses the need for broader awareness and better structured support systems within Nova Scotia. Traditional gambling addiction programs often fail to consider the cognitive and behavioural patterns typical of neurodivergence, making them less effective for this demographic.

Moreover, the conversation underscores the importance of a holistic approach in tackling this issue. This includes not only individual support but also community education and advocacy to destigmatize both neurodivergence and gambling addiction. **“We need a comprehensive strategy that includes education, community support, and access to specialized services,”** he asserts.

This dialogue emphasizes the urgent need for Nova Scotia to adapt its approach to gambling harms, considering the specific needs of the neurodivergent community.

By developing targeted, understanding-driven interventions, the region can better support its vulnerable populations. This focused effort promises not just to manage symptoms but to foster a deeper understanding and more effective support for those at risk.

# **GAMBLING AND YOUTH**

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## **TAKEAWAYS**

**Gambling through online platforms and social media is becoming a normal part of life for many young people in Nova Scotia, making it hard to spot when casual gaming turns into something more serious. This is especially concerning for youth and neurodivergent individuals who are more susceptible due to impulsivity and targeted marketing.**

**We need to raise awareness and provide education to push back against the glamorous image of gambling and show how digital platforms are designed to keep people hooked. Stricter advertising rules and clearer labelling of apps with gambling-like features can help parents and educators protect kids.**

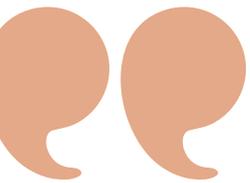
**A strong, community-wide approach focused on awareness and specialized support will help us tackle these hidden risks in Nova Scotia together.**



# GAMBLING AND DEPENDENCY

**What are the biological, psychological, and social facets that drive gambling dependency in Nova Scotia?**

Here we explore the role of dopamine in addictive behaviours, the spiritual voids that gambling attempts to fill, and the covert sciences that reinforce dependency. Realizing that gambling behaviours shape brain chemistry in similar ways that drugs like cocaine do, gives us reason to be much more concerned about the impacts of gambling on our communities.



## **'THERE'S A LOT OF STIGMA AROUND GAMBLING' The Social Worker's Story**

*A therapist who works with clients affected by gambling highlights the broad-reaching effects of gambling in Nova Scotia, emphasizing that it is not merely a personal issue but a societal one impacting entire communities.*

She points to the severe community repercussions of gambling dependency. **"There is a certain point in their relationship to gambling where it becomes about making the money back,"** she explains. This cycle of loss and the desperate attempts to recover funds can lead to a cascade of issues, including increased debt, family stress, and economic instability within communities.

She also touches on the stigma associated with gambling, which complicates efforts to address its impacts openly and effectively. She discusses the challenge in changing the narrative around gambling from a shameful activity to a recognized and addressable issue.

**"It's technically a behaviour; there's a lot of stigma around gambling because we don't have the same awareness as we do for something like substance use,"** she says. By comparing gambling to other forms of addiction, she advocates for a more empathetic and informed public approach, which could foster better support systems and recovery pathways.

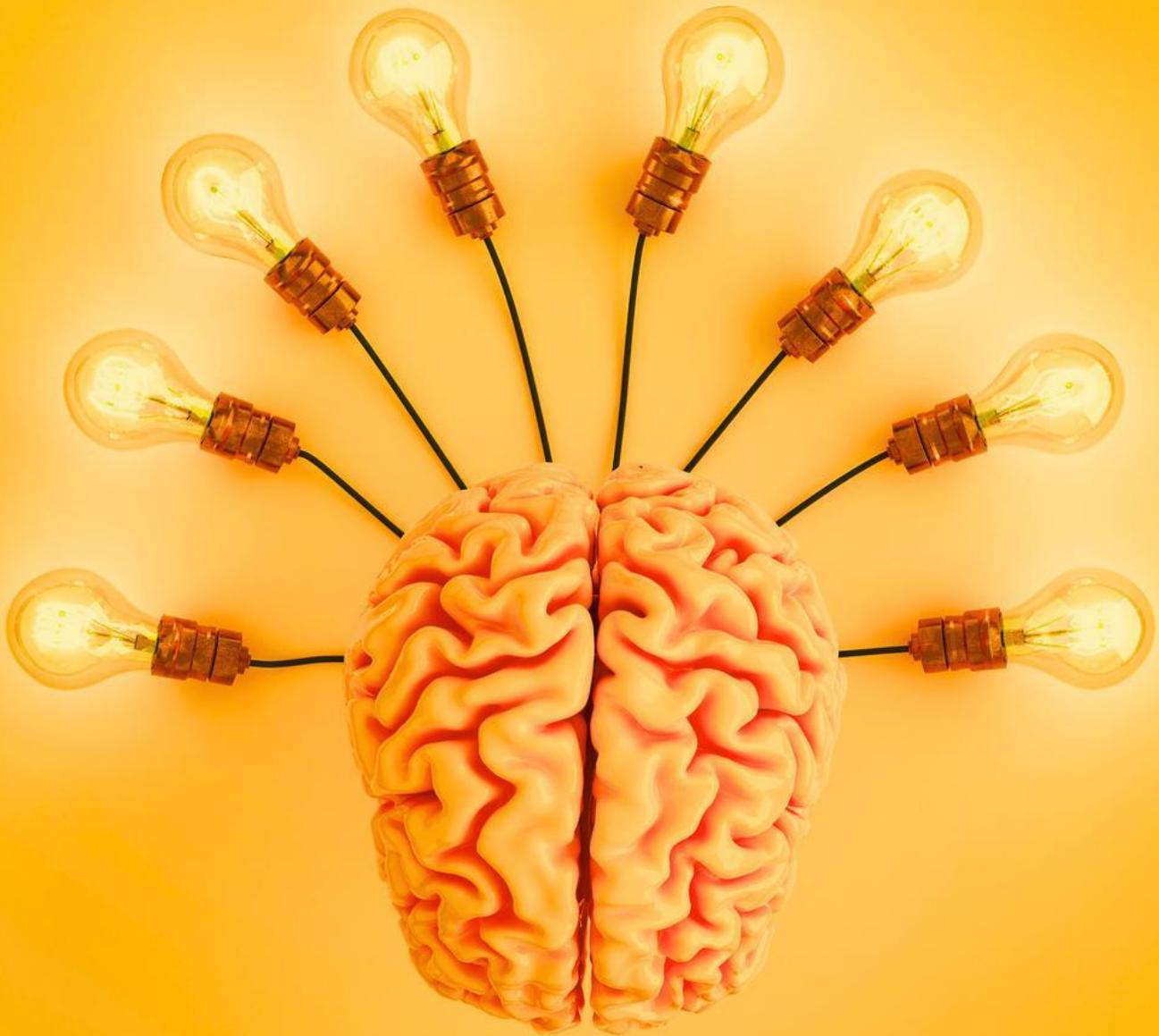
Lastly, she sheds light on the lack of resources and support for those affected by gambling in Nova Scotia. The absence of adequate treatment and recovery services exacerbates the problem, leaving many to struggle without the necessary help.

She stresses the importance of community and therapeutic support, suggesting that **"the pathway out of isolation, the pathway out of shame and out of stigma is connection with other people and compassion."**

She calls for a collective response that recognizes and addresses the social and community dimensions of gambling harms. Understanding these aspects is crucial to Nova Scotia mitigating the adverse effects of gambling and fostering a more supportive environment for recovery.

**"There's a lot of stigma around gambling because we don't have the same awareness as we do for something like substance use."**

**- NOVA SCOTIA SOCIAL WORKER**



## **DOPAMINE DEPENDENCY**

**Dopamine, often called the "feel-good" neurotransmitter, is key to understanding gambling addiction. It's part of the brain's reward system, making us feel pleasure and satisfaction.**

**When we do things we enjoy, like eating our favorite food or hanging out with friends, dopamine is released. The same thing happens during gambling when the brain expects a possible reward.**

## The Reward System

The rush of pleasure from dopamine makes us want to repeat the behaviour. Over time, chasing this dopamine high through gambling can lead to addiction, as the brain starts linking gambling with feeling good.

A tricky aspect of this is the "near miss." In gambling, a near miss—like getting two out of three symbols needed to win on a slot machine—can be almost as exciting as winning.

Gambling products are designed to show more near misses than would happen by chance, manipulating our brain's response and pushing us to keep playing.

## Dopamine Dysregulation and Chronic Gambling

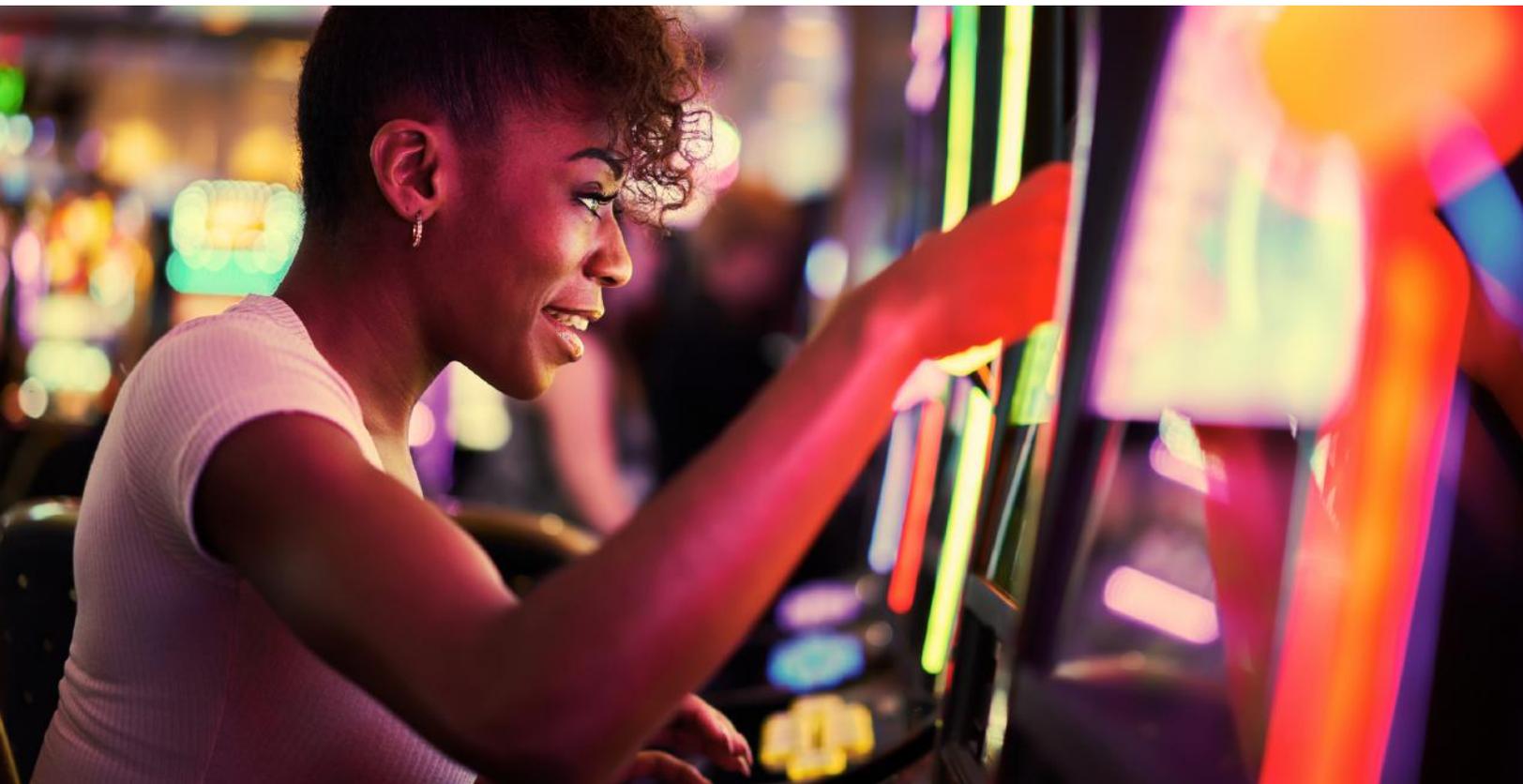
Another reason people keep gambling even when losing money is the risk-taking itself

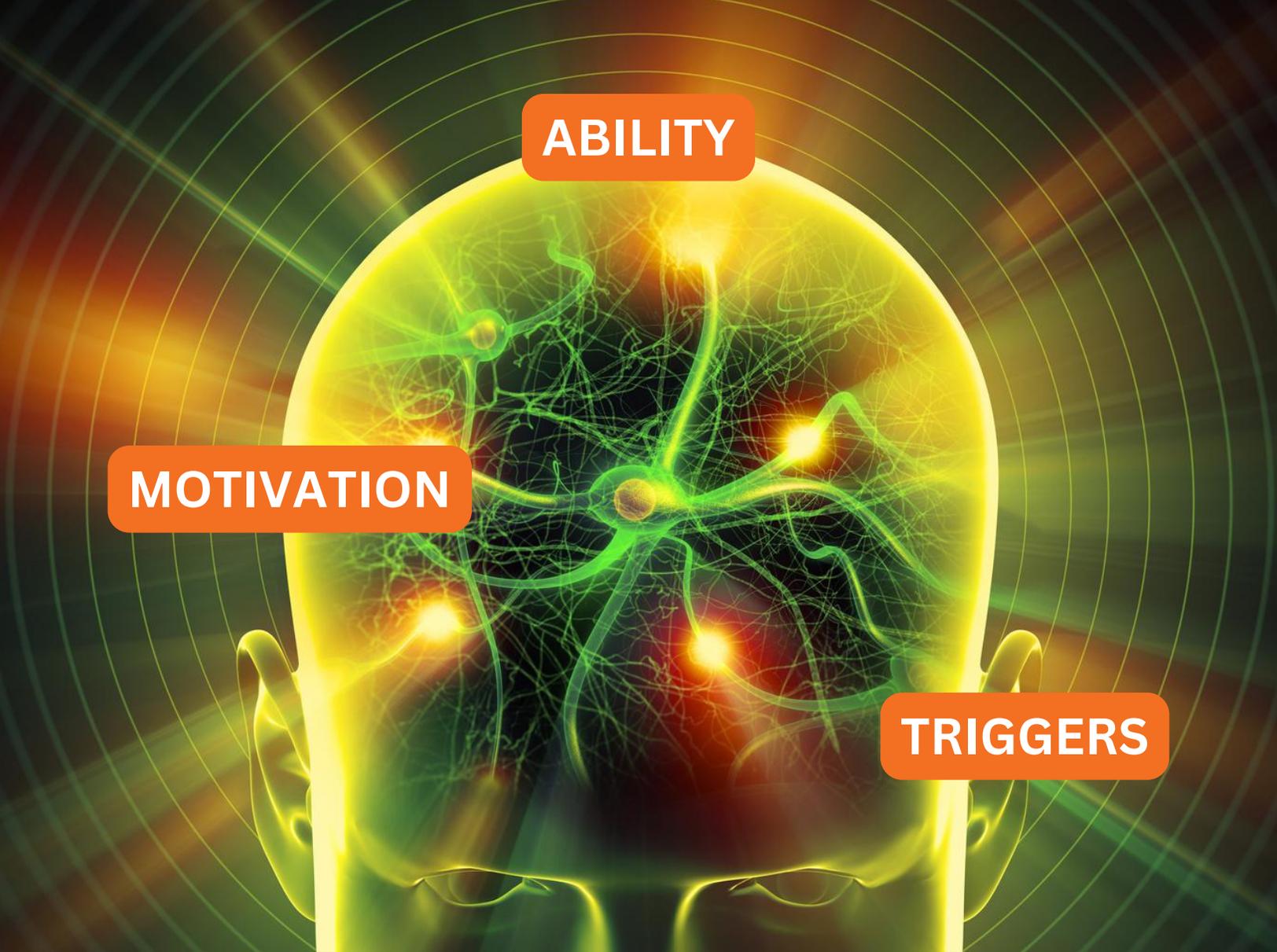
releases dopamine. So, we get a dopamine reward whether we win or lose, reinforcing the gambling behaviour continuously, even during losses.

People who gamble frequently can develop "dopamine dysregulation syndrome," where they have fewer dopamine receptors. This means they need more of any activity or substance to feel pleasure, leading to more gambling.

## Interventions and Treatment Approaches

To break this cycle, treatments often include cognitive-behavioural therapy and medications that adjust the dopamine system to reduce cravings. By understanding how our brains respond to risks and rewards, we can better support those at risk.





## TRAPPED MINDS

Addictive technology is also known as 'Captology,' a term coined by J. B. Fogg from the acronym for "Computers as Persuasive Technology". It focuses on using computers to change attitudes and behaviours. In online gambling, this means creating an environment that manipulates our decision-making.

Using Fogg's Behavior Model, which says behaviour comes from motivation, ability, and triggers, gambling sites make it easy to start (ability), keep offering rewards (motivation), and constantly send prompts (triggers) to keep us engaged.

## Unpredictable Rewards

The heart of addictive gambling technology is in its design. One common trick is the variable reward system, used in slot machines, VLTS and now online. This system gives rewards in an unpredictable way, making us keep playing. The design of gambling sites is also inviting and easy to use, with bright colors, pleasing sounds, and simple navigation to keep us interacting longer.

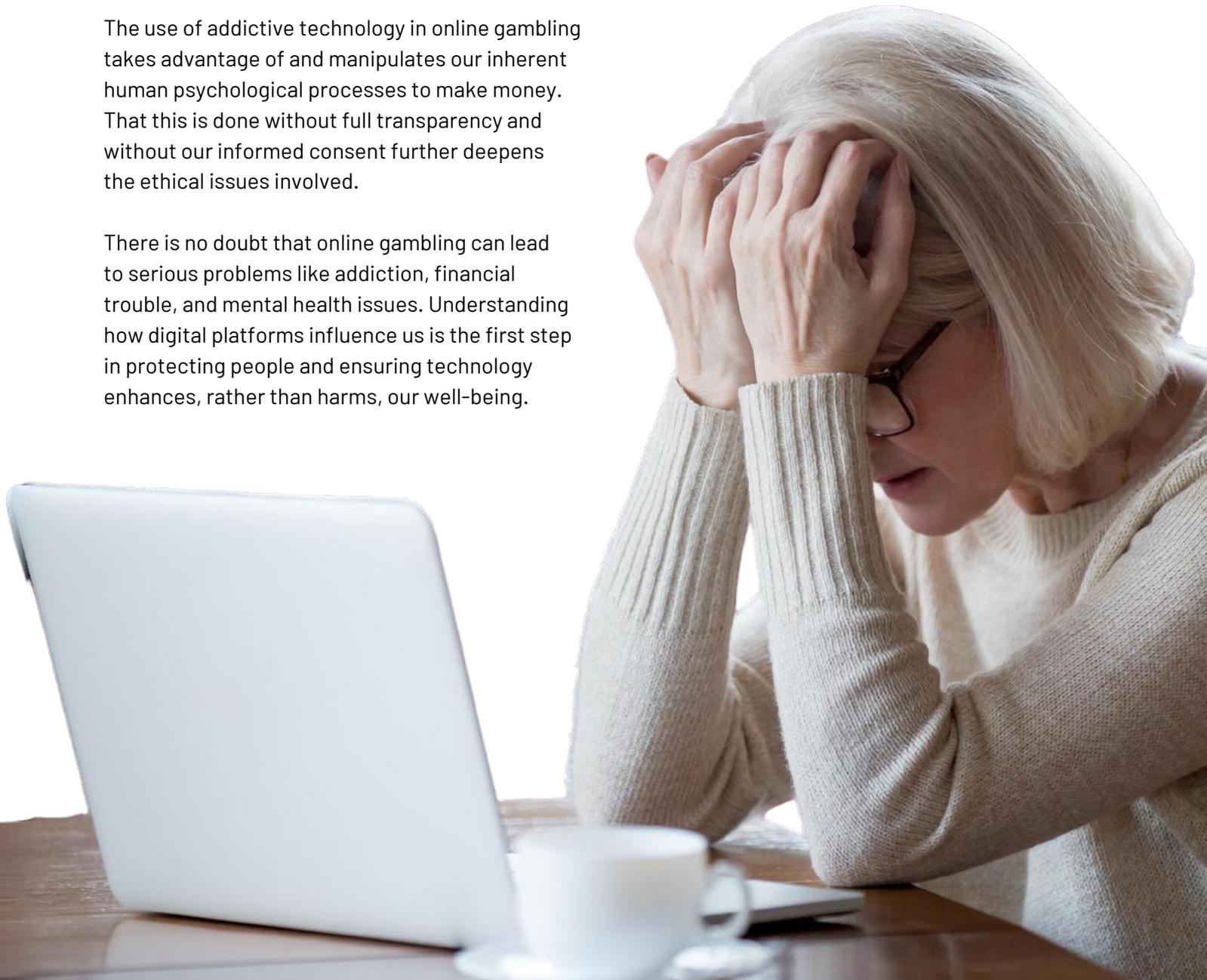
## Social Proof and Community Building

Online gambling sites also use social proof by showing big wins and player testimonials. Some even add social media features, letting users build communities and join tournaments. This not only makes gambling seem normal but also deepens our connection to the platform through social bonds.

## Ethics or Lack Thereof

The use of addictive technology in online gambling takes advantage of and manipulates our inherent human psychological processes to make money. That this is done without full transparency and without our informed consent further deepens the ethical issues involved.

There is no doubt that online gambling can lead to serious problems like addiction, financial trouble, and mental health issues. Understanding how digital platforms influence us is the first step in protecting people and ensuring technology enhances, rather than harms, our well-being.





## **FILLING THE VOID**

People often face a choice between quick satisfaction and enduring fulfillment. Gambling entices with the promise of immediate pleasure through the thrill of a win. Yet, beneath the surface thrill, many engage in gambling to fill a spiritual emptiness—a void that no form of dependency can satisfy.

### **The Need to Escape**

Gambling starts as a seemingly harmless diversion but can quickly become a dependency as stakes and risks increase. This dependency can be rooted in a desire to escape from reality.

The emotional rollercoaster of wins and losses may resemble life's natural highs and lows but lacks meaning, offering a false sense of control and achievement.

### **Materialism vs. Meaning**

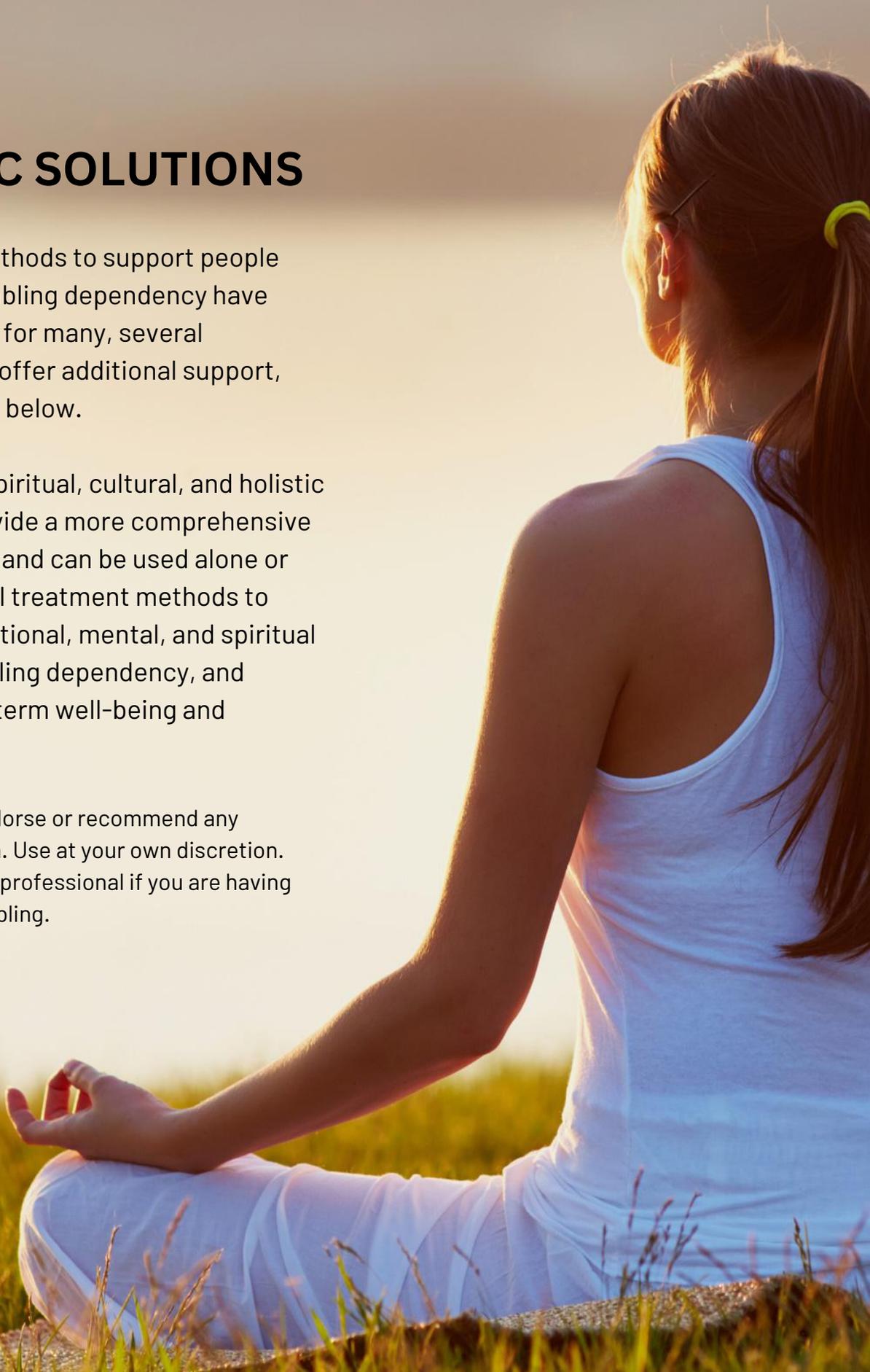
In today's materialistic society where tangible achievements are often valued over spiritual and emotional growth, gambling promises a quick fix to the void fostered by a lack of inner peace. But instead of providing real growth, each round of gambling merely intensifies the feelings of emptiness.

# HOLISTIC SOLUTIONS

While clinical methods to support people dealing with gambling dependency have proven effective for many, several alternatives can offer additional support, such as the ones below.

They integrate spiritual, cultural, and holistic practices to provide a more comprehensive path to recovery and can be used alone or alongside clinical treatment methods to address the emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of gambling dependency, and promoting long-term well-being and resilience.

GRINS does not endorse or recommend any particular approach. Use at your own discretion. Seek advice from a professional if you are having struggles with gambling.



## **Faith-Based Solutions**

Many religions and faith-based organizations provide support for members who are struggling with gambling harms. Methods include prayer, devotional practices, studying religious texts, fasting, and seeking community support. The focus is on finding strength through faith and relying on divine assistance to overcome dependency.

## **Indigenous Help**

Indigenous cultures have unique spiritual practices for dealing with dependency. These include participating in traditional ceremonies and seeking guidance from elders. These practices emphasize the importance of community and spiritual connection, helping individuals feel rooted in their heritage and supported by their people.

## **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness practices can help individuals become more aware of their impulses and triggers, providing a way to manage cravings and reduce urges to gamble. Techniques such as breathing exercises, body scans, and other forms of mindful awareness can help individuals develop greater self-control and emotional regulation.

## **Yoga**

Yoga focuses on integrating body, mind and spirit. Yoga poses, breathing techniques, and lifestyle changes can help manage stress and reduce problematic behaviours by promoting overall well-being and mental clarity. A regular yoga practice can enhance physical health, improve mental focus, and foster a sense of inner peace.

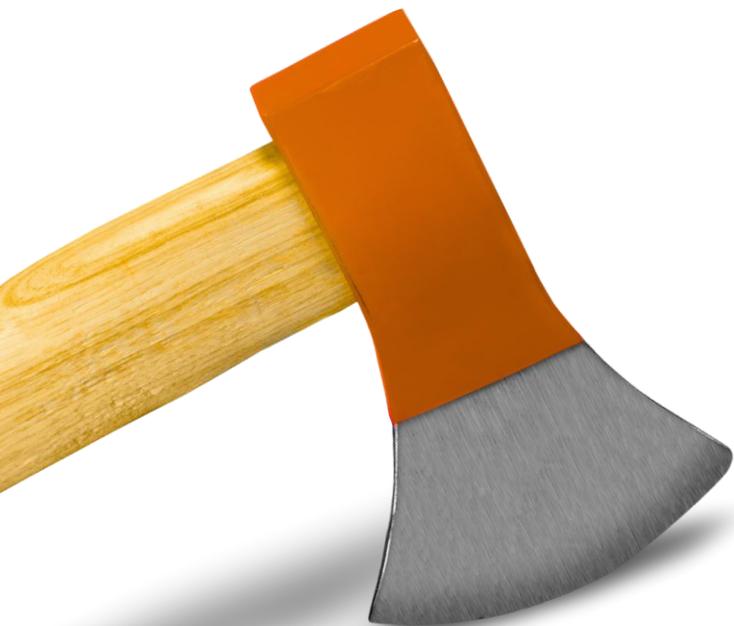
## **Meditation**

Meditation can help by reducing stress, improving self-control, and increasing awareness of thoughts and urges- helping individuals manage cravings and impulsive behaviour. There is a synergy between yoga and meditation that can prove a powerful antidote to harmful gambling behaviours.

## **Gamblers Anonymous**

Gamblers Anonymous (GA) offers a structured approach to tackling the void underlying gambling addiction. Drawing inspiration from Alcoholics Anonymous, GA's 12-step program promotes humility, accountability, and spiritual growth, which are essential for recovery. Through these steps, GA provides more than just a way to stop gambling; it offers a path toward filling the spiritual void with meaningful connections, personal accountability, and a deeper sense of community.





## LOST RESOURCES

When it comes to gambling dependency, individuals in Nova Scotia find themselves increasingly isolated. This is due to the gradual disassembly over many years of specialized support systems by the Province of Nova Scotia for those harmed by gambling.

In particular, the dismantling of Gambling Services (under the Department of Health), which tied together and monitored treatment, research and prevention was the major loss that enabled the rest.

The situation worsened with the loss of Gambling Awareness Nova Scotia, which had provided funding and support for community prevention initiatives and for research grants. One of the recent losses is the Gambling Support Network. Established in 1998, it provided a crucial first point of contact for people harmed by gambling, offering specialized assistance and support. Its elimination leaves Nova Scotians with fewer resources to effectively address gambling issues.

Compounding these challenges, the government has introduced legislation exempting both itself and industry bodies from lawsuits related to gambling harms. These changes further diminish accountability and protection for those affected.

## **Overburdened Mental Healthcare System**

Without dedicated funding, accountability, and specialized training for clinicians, the responsibility of providing services falls to the already overburdened mental healthcare system to handle the specialized needs of those challenged by gambling dependency.

## **Increasing Vulnerability**

The dismantling of these resources has left the population of Nova Scotia increasingly vulnerable to the harms of gambling. To combat this, it is essential to reallocate funds, promote accessibility, restore independent oversight, and consider banning harmful gambling products – as well as eliminating unfair legal barriers.

Both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have recently dedicated funds for upgrading the training of mental health professionals to enhance their capacity to support people harmed by gambling. We hope that resources will continue to be directed not only to treatment but also to prevention and health promotion initiatives including partnerships with, and financial support of, the work of community-led organizations across the province.



# **GAMBLING AND DEPENDENCY**

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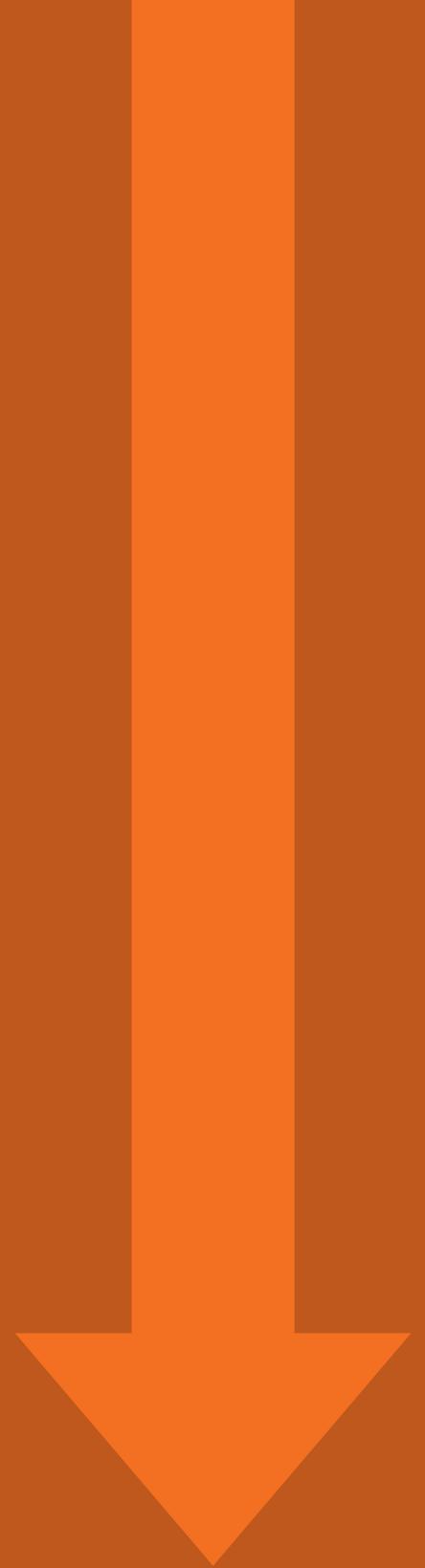
## **TAKEAWAYS**

**The challenges of gambling and dependency in Nova Scotia are deep and complex, touching both individuals and communities.**

**Understanding the biology behind addiction, the psychological lures of gambling, and its wider social impacts gives us a clearer picture of what's at stake.**

**It's vital we raise awareness and build the resources to meet Nova Scotia's specific needs. It's also vital that we reinstate lost resources, while rejuvenating those already in place.**

**Together, we can promote a healthier, more resilient community that's equipped to tackle gambling harms.**





# GAMBLING AND VLTs

**In Nova Scotia, the mix of video lottery terminals (VLTs) and alcohol is a worrying combination. Despite efforts to regulate gambling, the easy access to both makes managing this issue difficult.**

**Meanwhile, one tavern found success by refocusing on community engagement, transforming itself into a lively, welcoming gathering place that is a zero VLT environment.**

# CROSS-POLLINATING DEPENDENCY

VLTs are often found in bars and lounges across Nova Scotia, making gambling easily accessible in settings meant for relaxation and socializing. When patrons drink, their decision-making abilities decline, leading to impulsive behaviours around VLTs.

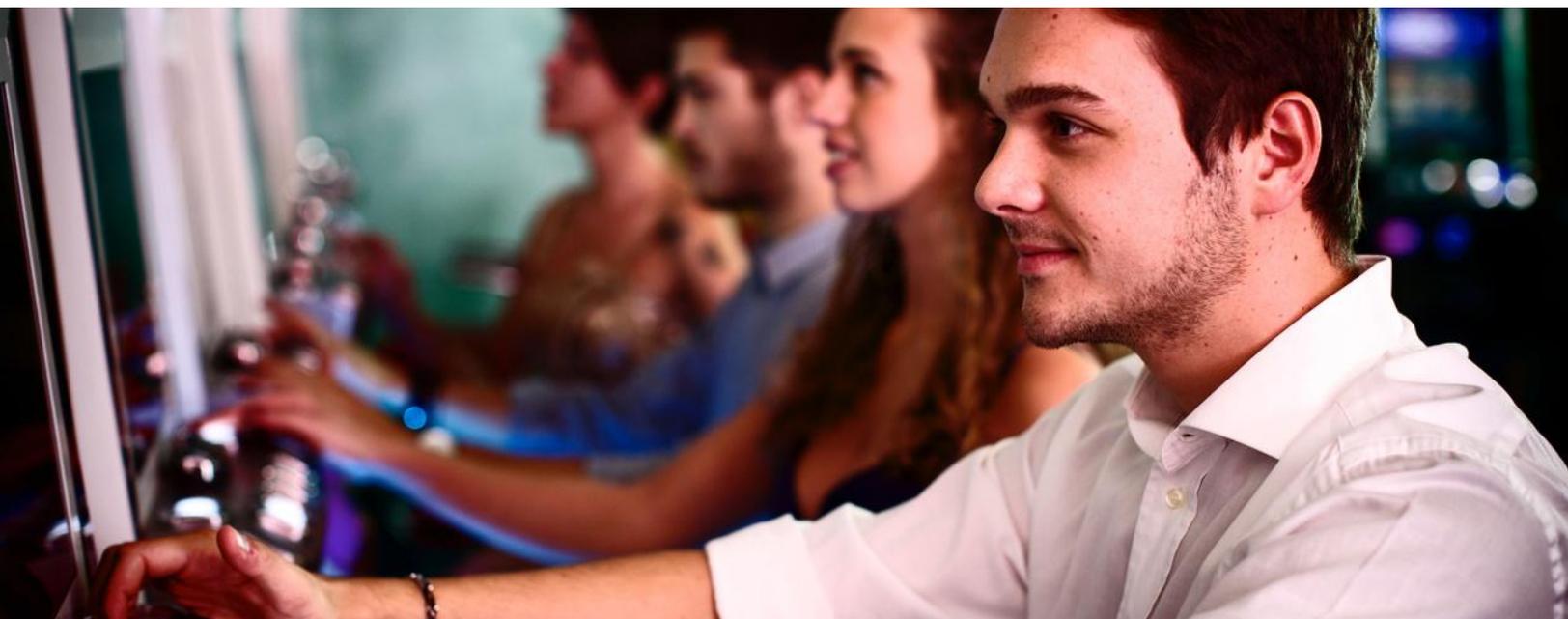
## Government Measures and Shortcomings

The Nova Scotia government recognized the dangers and attempted to implement the 'My-Play System' to promote safer gambling by requiring each user to have an activation card that set limits on time and money spent per day, but it was scrapped due to privacy concerns and fears of reduced revenue for bar owners.

Moreover, nearly half of VLT revenue comes from individuals adversely affected by gambling, making safer VLTs financially unfeasible. In Australia, the one to two percent of the population who are most harmed by gambling represent 40-50% of the losses from Electronic Gambling Machines (EGMs).

Current regulations, such as limiting the number of VLTs and setting closing times, do not fully address the issue. While removing the "stop" button—which gave a false sense of control and sped up gambling—was a positive step, much more needs to be done. The underlying problem is that once the government and industry stop psychologically manipulating people, profits will plummet, reducing the motivation to develop genuinely safer gambling practices.

However the success in Norway of significantly reducing gambling harms through legislation to mandate safer products shows that governments are capable of prioritizing protecting their citizens.



## The Impacts

Research shows that places offering both alcohol and gambling increase the risk of dependency. A study by the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness found that people who drink and gamble are more likely to develop dependency issues than those who only do one. Also, people using VLTs reported 3.5x more harm than those using casinos.

## Economic Benefits vs. Social Costs

While VLTs bring in money for the province, the social costs are steep. Using them can lead to financial problems, mental health issues, and strained relationships. Our already-strained healthcare system also ends up treating both gambling and substance dependencies simultaneously.

These impacts come with high costs. We need more resources for mental health services and community support. More people need help with housing, food security, and financial advice due to gambling dependency.

The justice system faces extra costs from crimes linked to gambling. Even workplace productivity drops as affected employees struggle. While VLTs generate revenue, we can't ignore the broader impacts they cause.



## Possible Strategies for Mitigating Risks

- Provide transparency about the risks of using VLTs, including clear labeling on machines detailing how they manipulate behaviour, and the consequences of using them. (Similar to how cigarette packaging informs people of the dangers so they can make an informed choice about their use.)
- Enhance Monitoring: Enable users to monitor and restrict their own gambling with a sign-in system to VLTs and similar products, as has been done successfully in Norway.
- Educational Campaigns: Implement public health campaigns focused on the risks of combining alcohol and gambling.
- Support Systems: Provide better support networks for those struggling with gambling harms, including counseling and treatment programs tailored to dual dependencies.

Engaging the community for feedback can lead to more nuanced and effective policies. Addressing this issue requires tighter regulation, public education, and enhanced support for those harmed by gambling. By doing so, Nova Scotia can mitigate these risks and foster a healthier, more sustainable approach to leisure and entertainment.



### Lower Risk Gambling Guidelines:

<https://gamblingguidelines.ca>



### Lower Risk Drinking Guidelines:

<https://tinyurl.com/low-risk-alcohol>



### Lower Risk Cannabis Guidelines:

<https://tinyurl.com/low-risk-cannabis>



## Contrasting Stories

Use of VLTs can lead to vastly different outcomes for Legion branches. In one Legion in Nova Scotia, a tragic incident occurred when a staff member was killed by an individual using a VLT when they were asked to stop gambling.

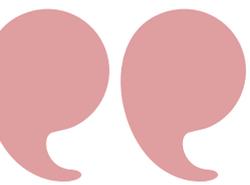
Conversely, another Legion voluntarily removed their VLTs, which led to increased membership and revenue. In their last year with VLTs, they took in about \$25,000, but \$21,000 of that went to the Atlantic Lottery Corporation, so it was not actually a big revenue generator for the Legion. **“We saw people coming in to use the VLTs, who couldn’t really afford the money that they were spending, at the end of the month, when their pension check came in.”** By focusing instead on enhanced social opportunities it became one of the fastest-growing Legions in Canada.

The same applies to bars. One bar owner woke one day to find that a long time customer had suicided after debt built up from using the VLTs. It was clear to him that his business had been exploiting loyal customers and community members through the use of addictive VLT gambling machines. He made the tough decision to voluntarily rid his establishment of VLT’s and the easy revenue associated with them.

A 15% decrease in revenue followed this decision. But by creating a place where customers felt cared for, respected, "at home", and safe, accompanied with high quality and age-appropriate entertainment and food choices, he was able to recuperate the missing revenue in less than a year. He effectively developed a new platform of repeat customers who were quick to recommend his establishment to friends, also saving advertising expenses. He had effectively improved his social impact on the community in which he operated, evolved his patronage while also maintaining a sustainable business for many years thereafter.

On the next page is another example of how removing VLTs can foster a stronger, more engaged community.





## LIFE AFTER VLTs

### The Tavern Owners Story

*A popular tavern once buzzed with lively conversations, but this atmosphere became overshadowed by the hum of VLTs. While initially profitable, these machines gradually pushed away the core clientele, replacing the dynamic social scene with solitary gambling. This story explores how the tavern reclaimed its identity by eliminating these machines.*

**"We lost our way when the machines came in; it was time to bring back the real tavern experience,"** said the tavern's owner. The VLTs had altered the ambiance, deterring regulars who valued the tavern's community vibe. Faced with a choice between quick profits or long-term engagement, management chose the latter.

After removing the VLTs, the tavern underwent extensive renovations. Spaces previously dominated by gambling were converted into areas for socializing and live music. **"We wanted to restore that old tavern feel—where everyone knows your name and they're always glad you came,"** the owner elaborated. Community events, trivia nights, and live entertainment started attracting a diverse crowd, and patrons who had previously shunned the tavern began to return.

Although there was an initial dip in finances, the tavern experienced a resurgence in profits, customer loyalty, community goodwill, and overall growth.

**"Removing the VLTs was the best decision we made. It was about more than money—it was about reclaiming our community spirit and our identity as a gathering place,"** reflected the owner.

By prioritizing people over machines, the tavern solidified its status as a community cornerstone, while highlighting a crucial lesson for businesses: genuine success is built on fostering a vibrant, engaged community.

## **Resource for businesses who want to move away from VLTs:**

This is an interactive workshop, designed by the Acadia Centre for Entrepreneurship, that you can work through to learn how to replace risky revenues with other sources that maintain or enhance profitability.

<https://gamblingriskinformednovascotia.ca/tools-for-business>

**"We wanted to restore that old tavern feel—where everyone knows your name and they're always glad you came."**

**- NOVA SCOTIA  
TAVERN OWNER**



# **GAMBLING AND VLTs**

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## **TAKEAWAYS**

**Mixing VLTs and alcohol presents significant risks, especially in social settings where impaired judgment leads to impulsive and often financially damaging gambling.**

**Current regulations fall short of addressing this unique problem; stricter monitoring, public awareness campaigns, and robust support networks are needed.**

**The stories from the Legion and the bars show that businesses can succeed without gambling. By focusing on real connections with customers, they've built loyalty and goodwill. This proves that valuing relationships and quality experiences is better than going for quick profits.**





# GAMBLING AND THE ESTABLISHMENT

Gambling in Nova Scotia is a delicate balance between entertainment, economic revenue, and social consequences. Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs), casinos, and online betting bring in significant revenue for the province but also impose considerable social and financial costs on individuals and communities. And how can gambling be a 'net positive' when support for gambling harms have been systematically removed, putting increased pressure on our already challenged mental health services?

Legal and systemic challenges make regulating gambling difficult due to the government's reliance on this income. When the regulator benefits financially, it creates a conflict of interest. Efforts like the 'Babstock' case highlight the struggle to hold the industry accountable. As gambling continues to impact Nova Scotians, policies are needed to mitigate these harms.



## 'IT'S A TAX ON THE POOR' The Legal Expert's Story

*Nova Scotia is grappling with significant challenges related to gambling, particularly with VLTs. These machines are often described as a "tax on the poor" because they prey on financially insecure individuals with the false promise of a big win.*

A legal expert leading the fight against these practices has provided critical insights into the issue. He argues, "**Governments are addicted to the income from gambling,**" highlighting a conflict of interest where revenue needs overshadow the impacts on individuals, families and communities.

One notable case, Babstock, challenged the Atlantic Lottery Corporation's role in perpetuating gambling harms. Although it reached the Supreme Court of Canada, the case faced hurdles. During this time, the Nova Scotia government quietly

passed legislation that barred class proceedings against the Atlantic Lottery Corporation. **"Do you know a problem gambler that has money to hire a lawyer to bring an action?"** the expert questioned.

The legal landscape is further complicated by recent changes in class action suit regulations, which protect gambling entities by limiting public legal challenges. **"You can't take the government into court"** the expert explains. This creates a legal environment where those harmed by gambling have little to no recourse.

The province's approach to gambling reveals a broader societal issue. Gambling dependency is often mischaracterized as a personal failing rather than a systemic failure. **"It's largely taxation of the poor because it's the poor people that are going in trying to improve their life,"** the expert remarks. Addressing the root causes of gambling dependency requires recognizing the predatory nature of gambling and the socio-economic conditions that drive individuals to gamble.

Despite the challenges, there is a clear path forward. **"By acknowledging and addressing the systemic issues linked to gambling and implementing robust legal and social reforms, the province can protect its residents from the predatory practices of gambling operations."** This approach not only helps those affected by gambling but also strengthens the social fabric of the community, making it a safer, healthier place for all.

**"It's largely taxation of the poor because it's the poor people that are going in trying to improve their life."**

**- NOVA SCOTIA LEGAL EXPERT**

# RISKY REVENUE

VLTs, casinos, and online betting platforms are big money makers in Nova Scotia. While they boost the profits of some businesses and add to the province's General Funds, they also cause serious harm. The financial gain from gambling comes at a significant cost to individuals, businesses and communities.

## Impact on Business

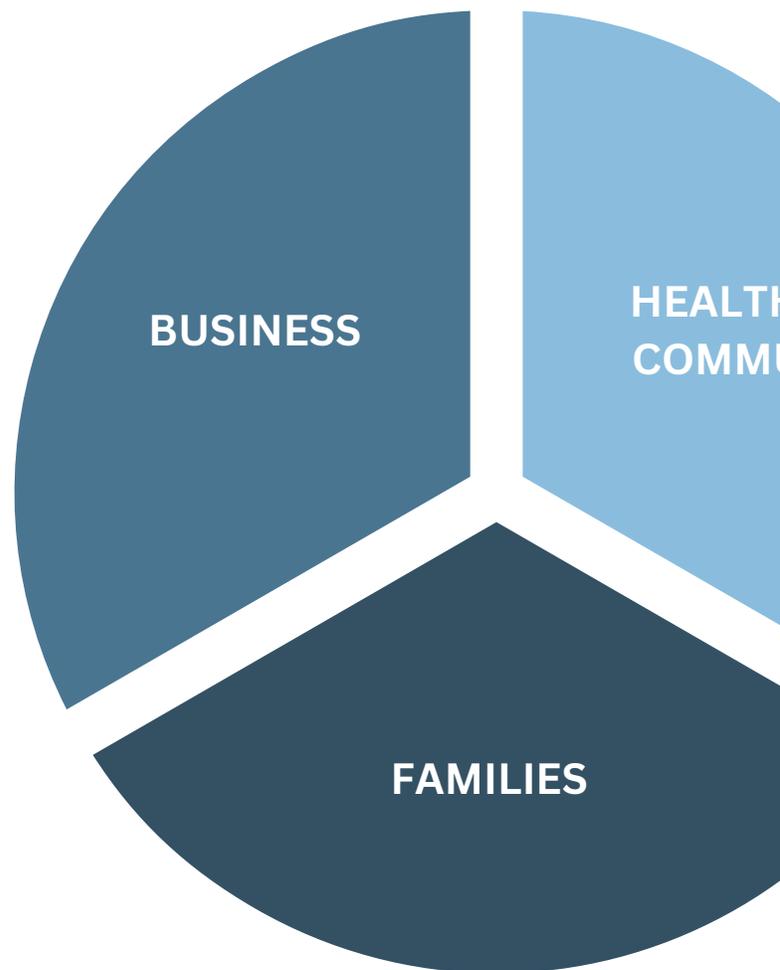
Local businesses suffer when disposable income is diverted to gambling. This reduction in consumer spending weakens the overall economic health of the community and can lead to slower growth and fewer job opportunities.

## Health and Community Costs

Gambling can lead to mental health issues like depression and anxiety. The Nova Scotia Health Authority spends a lot on treating these problems, diverting resources from other health needs. Gambling dependency can also lead to theft, fraud, and domestic disputes, straining social services and law enforcement.

## Impact on Families

Families often bear the heaviest burden. Financial instability from gambling can lead to hardships such as loss of property and severe debt. This stress disrupts relationships and impacts children's well-being.



## **A Dilemma of Priorities**

While gambling revenues provide financial benefits, the hidden costs are substantial. Nova Scotia must evaluate these trade-offs and adopt ethical gambling policies to ensure a healthier and more stable future for its residents. By doing so, the province can reduce its reliance on gambling revenue and protect its citizens.

## **Who is “Responsible” for Gambling Harms?**

The Reno Model that uses the term “responsible gambling” was developed by industry to place the blame for gambling harms onto the individuals who are hurt by them. This is based on the premise that people who gamble are “rational self-interested economic actors”, that is, as if they are always making conscious choices to maximize their own benefit. But the mechanisms of gambling products are specifically designed to manipulate users' brains to keep them losing. And the technologies continue to be more sophisticated and damaging. We need to shift this focus and ensure that government and industry take full responsibility for the harm they create.



# THE MONEY SIPHON

In Nova Scotia, gambling quietly siphons off almost \$400 million each year in disposable income (\$394,478,000 in 2022-23). This financial drain impacts not just individuals who gamble but also families, local business and the broader community, weakening the region's economic foundations.

## The Scale of Gambling

Despite its modest population, Nova Scotia has a high engagement in gambling activities, from lottery tickets and VLTs to casino gambling and online betting. This widespread accessibility turns gambling into a common pastime but also means significant amounts of money leave the pockets of Nova Scotians—money that could otherwise support local businesses and boost the economy. In 2022-23 Nova Scotians spent over \$1.4 billion dollars on gambling, with about one billion being returned as “winnings” (actually a \$400 million loss).

## Very Disposable Income

“Disposable income” is the money households have available after taxes and essential expenses. When \$400 million is diverted into gambling annually, it means less spending on retail, education, and recreation—all vital for the community's economic health. This diversion reduces overall economic activity, leading to slower growth and fewer job opportunities.



## The Social Cost

The social costs of gambling are severe. Gambling harms include debt, stress, and financial insecurity, and can escalate into mental health issues and strained relationships. Families of people who are harmed by these unsafe gambling products often face significant financial and emotional hardships. This increases demand for social services, further straining provincial resources.

## Ethical Dilemma

The Nova Scotia government collects significant revenue from gambling, which is often used for public services.

However, this creates an ethical dilemma when the societal costs of gambling are considered; public services have traditionally been funded through taxes, and shifting this to rely on revenue from gambling products, which often disproportionately affect lower-income citizens, raises significant ethical concerns. The potential harm these gambling products can cause makes this approach highly problematic.

A particularly important point is that prevalence studies from across Canada have shown that, for example, almost half the revenue from VLTs comes from people who experience harm from using them. This means that there is little motivation to create safer gambling practices as doing so would make them financially non-viable.

There is a need for policies that promote design of safer gambling products, thus reducing the risk that citizens will be harmed by gambling. Implementing stricter regulations on gambling ads, setting lower betting limits, and launching public awareness campaigns could help mitigate the financial drain, health issues, and the negative impacts on local businesses caused by gambling.

## Turning Off the Siphon

Gambling contributes to provincial revenue, but the \$400 million extracted annually undermines financial stability and well-being. Nova Scotia must balance the economic benefits of gambling with the need to protect its citizens. A nuanced dialogue between stakeholders is essential to retain economic benefits while minimizing harms.



# TARNISHED IDOLS

In Nova Scotia, sports figures are highly influential and seen as role models. When they promote gambling, they risk tarnishing their reputations, as well as leading fans—especially youth—toward gambling.

## The Power of the Game

Sports personalities have a broad appeal and public trust, making them effective in advertising. When they endorse products, those products seem trustworthy. Gambling operators use this to their advantage, linking their brands to popular athletes. In Nova Scotia, where sports like hockey and curling are beloved, these endorsements can have a significant impact.

## Penalty Box: Risk to Reputation

When sports figures endorse gambling, they make it seem harmless, which can be misleading, especially to young fans. Athletes who endorse gambling risk their reputations, as fans may see them as choosing profit over their admirers' well-being.



## Changing the Playbook

Legislative change is complicated by the fact that jurisdiction of these issues is divided between federal and provincial statutes. We will need cooperation between levels of government to make effective change. Some changes are already happening, and we can encourage our representatives to continue this work.

**Legislative measures to protect sports integrity and vulnerable people could include:**

- Prohibiting sports personalities from directly endorsing gambling.
- Limiting gambling ads during sports broadcasts and on platforms frequented by minors.
- Imposing strict penalties for breaches of advertising guidelines.

Legislative efforts should include public consultations with sports organizations, athletes, and the public to create comprehensive regulations. Educational programs highlighting gambling risks and the ethical responsibilities of public figures can also help reduce the influence of gambling ads.

## Protecting the Future

By implementing specific legislation, Nova Scotia can protect its sports heroes' integrity and its citizens from gambling harms. Athletes have the power to influence, and it's crucial this power is used responsibly to foster a healthy, ethical environment for all.



# GAMBLING AND ESTABLISHMENT

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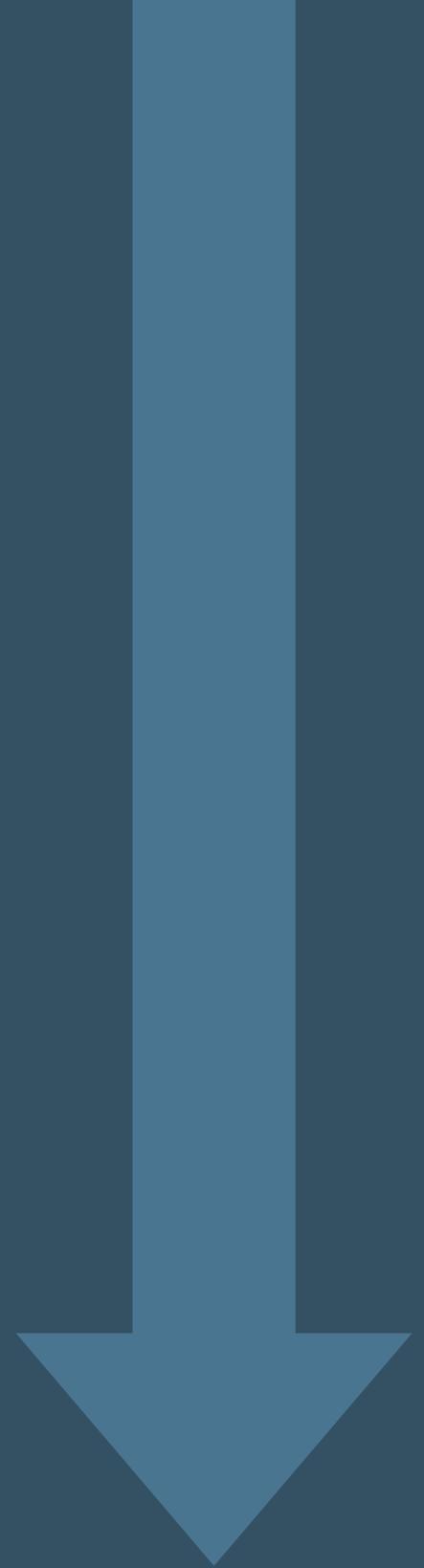
## TAKEAWAYS

It is essential to challenge the myth of economic benefits from gambling. While gambling revenue is a reality, the supposed profits are overshadowed by the substantial costs to social services, mental health care, the justice system, and lost revenue for local businesses. These hidden costs likely far exceed any revenue generated from gambling, questioning the true economic advantage.

The province should implement stricter regulations to limit predatory practices and launch public awareness campaigns to reframe gambling as a systemic issue rather than a personal failing.

Policymakers need to establish a transparent and ethical regulatory framework that prioritizes community welfare and ensures economic policies do not compromise social stability and public health. Enhanced support services for affected individuals are crucial.

By focusing on these strategies, Nova Scotia can better protect its citizens and promote a healthier, more stable community.





# GAMBLING AND US

**Gambling Risk Informed Nova Scotia (GRINS) is a non-profit organization passionately dedicated to raising awareness about the potential risks and negative impacts of gambling in Nova Scotia.**

**Our volunteer board is made up of committed community members who work tirelessly to promote resilience through engaging, interactive educational resources and advocacy for responsible policies and practices by government and business.**

# OUR VISION

We envision compassionate, sustainable communities with informed and caring gambling practices.

**Compassionate:** We see the government and the gambling industry as being largely unconcerned about the damage they are doing to individuals and communities. We would like to see a change in this attitude.

**Sustainable:** Gambling does not create anything of value; it simply redistributes wealth from citizens to the government and from poorer individuals to wealthier ones (Poorer people spend a higher proportion of their income on gambling, while only the well-off benefit from grants funded by gambling revenue). This outflow of money causes economic hardship for local businesses and the community.

**Communities:** We focus on the well-being of entire communities, as well as individuals and families, looking at both the benefits and harms of gambling.

**Informed Gambling Practices:** People who gamble are often unaware of the risks involved. Gambling is typically a deceptive practice. We aim to help citizens make informed decisions about it.

**Caring Gambling Practices:** If the entertainment value lies in risk-taking, then gambling practices should minimize harm. Currently, casino workers are not allowed to intervene when they see patrons harming themselves through gambling. This business practice is uncaring and dangerous. We advocate for practices that prioritize the safety and well-being of individuals.

**“Our goal is to create a culture that does not tolerate the covert manipulation of people's unconscious urges for a quick profit at the expense of the health of our communities.”**

**- BRUCE DIENES, GRINS CHAIR**

## Our Values

Our core values are rooted in the belief that viewing gambling as a source of profit is misleading and unethical. We are committed to spreading this truth and sharing stories of community transformation that foster healing, safety, and a sense of belonging. We prioritize ethics in all our actions, and ensure that our recommendations are effectively communicated to the public and policymakers.

## Our Goals

At GRINS, our goals focus on enlightening the public about the risks of gambling through workshops, educational initiatives, and informative materials. We actively advocate for policies that promote safer and more transparent gambling practices. This helps keep everyone safer, but is particularly relevant for vulnerable groups. Additionally, we organize awareness campaigns and events that engage the community in addressing the impacts of gambling.

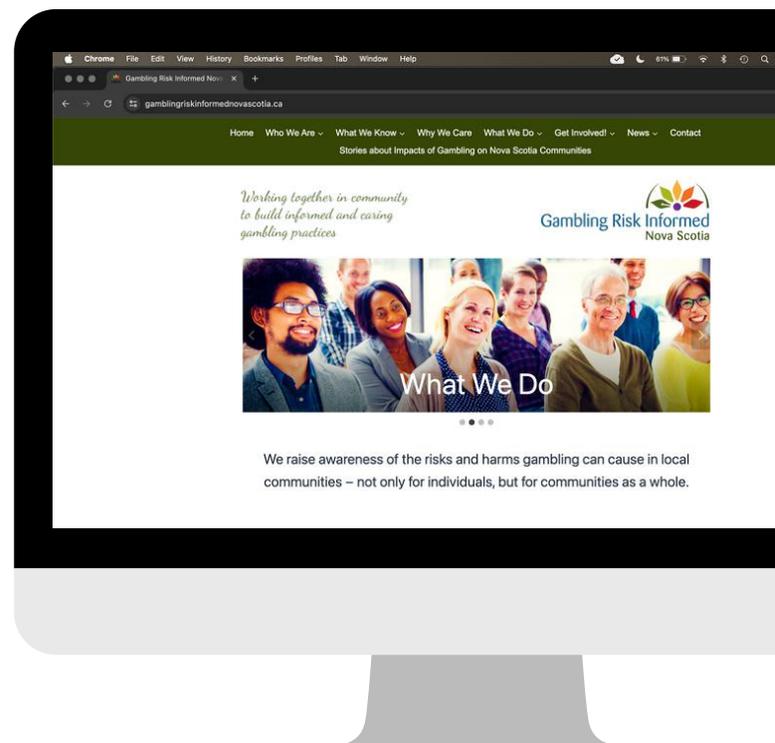
## Our Past

GRINS has been at the forefront of initiatives to help Nova Scotians know about the harmful effects of gambling. We have launched multimedia campaigns aimed at educating the public about gambling risks and demanding safer policies and practices from business and government. Our educational programs have offered schools, youth leaders and community organizations materials and workshops to help them identify and address gambling harms effectively.

## Our Future

Looking towards the future, GRINS is actively engaged in several exciting projects and initiatives. We continue to alert citizens to the increasing dangers of online gambling and sports betting. Our Youth Gambling Video Project aims to educate young people about the risks associated with gambling through engaging content. The Our Town Workshop provides an interactive theatre platform to raise awareness about the community impacts of gambling.

Future plans include expanding outreach efforts, advocating for policy enhancements, and fostering stronger partnerships within communities to involve more stakeholders in preventing gambling-related harms.



## Our Board

Since our inception, we have attracted a diverse range of individuals to serve on our board, each bringing their unique perspectives and skills. Here are some examples from over the years:

- **Community Policing Officer:** Provided insight into the impact of gambling debt on domestic violence calls.
- **Seniors' Safety Coordinator:** Observed the harm caused to seniors by unsafe gambling products.
- **Psychology Professor:** Conducted research into the impact of gambling on youth.
- **Injury-Free Nova Scotia ED:** Raised awareness of suicide as a major injury resulting from gambling.
- **NSCC Instructor:** Educated Addictions Community Outreach Workers.
- **Business Owner:** Revealed insights into the economic impacts of gambling.
- **Community Member:** Shared lived experiences of gambling harms.
- **Addictions Therapist:** Offered insights into the deeper harms caused by gambling.
- **Students in Psychology and Medicine:** Contributed new research and information.
- **Anti-Money Laundering Specialist:** Highlighted the use of gambling by organized crime.
- **Canadian Forces Member:** Raised awareness of how PTSD can increase the risk of gambling harm.
- **Graphic Designer:** Developed our website and outreach materials.
- **Business Development Manager:** Provided expertise in strategic partnerships.
- **Product Management Leader:** Brought expertise in artificial intelligence and data science.
- **Project Engineer:** Coordinated projects and workflow.
- **Others:** These include individuals who have seen the impact of gambling harms on their friends, colleagues, and communities and wanted to help make a difference.

## OUR PLEDGE

GRINS is a vital force in addressing gambling issues within Nova Scotia. Through education, and advocacy, we strive to mitigate the harmful effects of gambling and promote a healthier, more knowledgeable community. With the provincial government stripping away support for gambling harms, our mission is more important than ever. With a proven track record of accomplishments and ambitious plans, GRINS remains an essential advocate for communities impacted by gambling.





# GAMBLING AND YOU

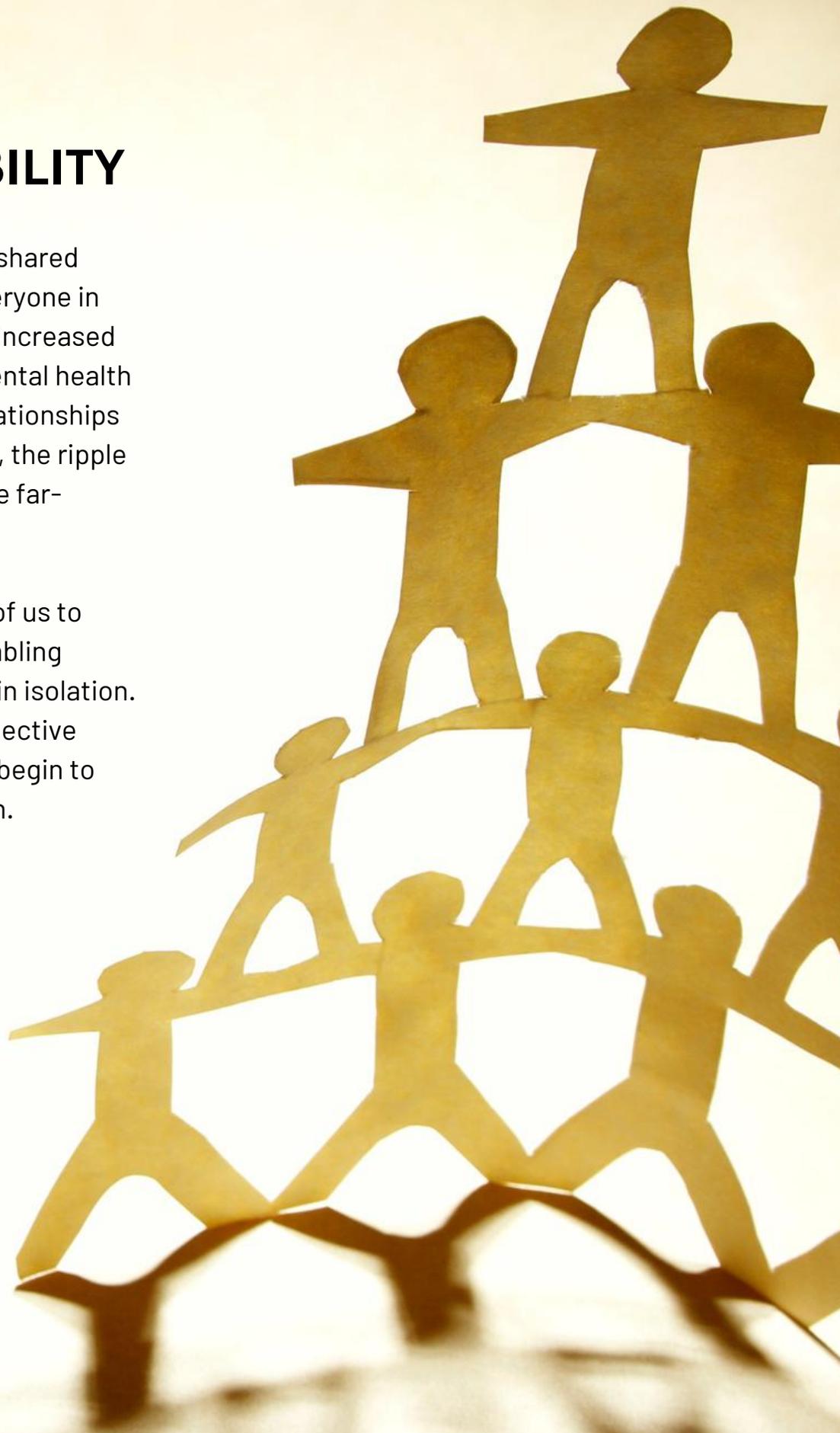
**Gambling impacts not just individuals but entire communities. Whether we like it or not, the negative consequences of gambling extend beyond the person placing the bet.**

**As such, it is crucial for everyone—citizens, community members, business leaders and government officials—to recognize and address these harms for the well-being of our children, families, and society.**

# SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Gambling harms are a shared problem, affecting everyone in the community. From increased financial strain and mental health issues to damaged relationships and community harms, the ripple effects of gambling are far-reaching.

It's essential for each of us to acknowledge that gambling problems do not exist in isolation. By recognizing our collective responsibility, we can begin to take meaningful action.



## The Impact on Families and Communities

Gambling can devastate families, leading to emotional distress, financial instability, and damaged relationships. Communities bear the burden of these personal losses, experiencing increased demands on social services, healthcare systems, and public safety resources.

The financial costs are significant, with money that could support local businesses and charitable causes instead funnelled into gambling losses. Understanding these impacts helps us appreciate the need for a community-wide response.

## Taking Action

Awareness is the first step towards change. By educating ourselves and others about the risks and impacts of gambling, we can foster a more informed community. GRINS offers a range of resources and workshops designed to shift the culture around gambling to one that is less about stigma and more about caring for one another. Volunteering with GRINS or participating in our initiatives could make a big difference.

## Advocacy and Policy Change

Effective change requires action at the policy level. We encourage you to petition your local representatives to support regulations that promote safer gambling practices and protect vulnerable populations. Advocating for better policies and regulations will create a safer environment for everyone.





# HOW YOU CAN HELP?

Here are some ways you can mitigate gambling harms in your community:

- **Educate Yourself and Others:** Understanding the risks and signs of gambling harms is the first step. Share this knowledge with friends, family, and community members to increase awareness.
- **Promote Safer Gambling:** Encourage safer gambling products and support campaigns that aim to reduce gambling-related harms.
- **Support Local Initiatives:** Get involved with local organizations like GRINS that work towards reducing gambling harms. Participate in their programs, attend workshops, and support their campaigns.
- **Volunteer:** Offer your time and skills to support community initiatives aimed at preventing gambling harms. This could involve helping with educational programs, providing peer support, or assisting in research projects.
- **Advocate for Change:** Engage with local government officials and policymakers to support stronger regulations on gambling. This includes limiting access to high-risk gambling products like VLTs, online casinos, and online sports betting. Petition your local and provincial government by writing letters, signing petitions, and attending public meetings to push for legislative changes that protect the community from gambling harms.
- **Create Safer Spaces:** Work with local businesses and community centres to create environments that promote healthy activities and discourage gambling.
- **Support Those Affected:** If you know someone struggling with gambling, offer your support and encourage them to seek help. Provide information about available resources, such as helplines and counselling services.
- **Participate in Research:** Engage with community-based research initiatives to help identify effective strategies for reducing gambling harms.

**By taking these actions, you can help create a safer, healthier community for everyone.**

If you or someone you know is struggling with gambling, don't hesitate to seek help See the Resources section below.



# **GAMBLING AND THE FUTURE**

**The challenges posed by gambling are significant, but they are not insurmountable. By coming together as a community and working in collaboration with government and other stakeholders, we can pave the way for a brighter future.**



## Community-Level Initiatives

Our shared community should be at the heart of any effective strategy to address gambling harms. The future we envision is one where communities demand informed and caring gambling practices as a core value. This involves more than just addressing individual harms; it requires a collective effort to create a safe and supportive environment for everyone.

Gambling harms extend far beyond those who may lose money or become dependent. They impact everyone in the community, regardless of whether they gamble. The negative effects ripple out, affecting families, workplaces, and social structures. We must ensure that citizens recognize these broader impacts and understand that they, too, are being hurt by unsafe gambling practices.

## Government Collaboration

Local governments play a crucial role in shaping the health and safety of their citizens.

Empowered by the Municipalities Act, they have the authority to create by-laws that protect the community, similar to how smoke-free places legislation began at the municipal level. We need to involve all levels of government in this initiative. Municipalities can lead the way by establishing regulations that promote safer gambling practices.

We must press for policy changes that prioritize public health over revenue generation. This could include safer betting limits in online gambling venues, increased funding for support services, stricter regulations on gambling advertising, particularly those targeting youth, and preventive measures in educational institutions. Effective and accessible destigmatized resources for those harmed by unsafe gambling products should also be part of this process.

## Educational Efforts

Education is a powerful tool in preventing gambling harms. By integrating awareness programs into school curriculums, we can equip young people with the knowledge and skills to make better choices. The Nova Scotia Government is developing a Middle School curriculum on substance use, gambling and mental health. We need to support and monitor these efforts. Public awareness campaigns can also play a vital role in educating the broader community about the risks of gambling and the available support services. An informed community is better equipped to recognize gambling harms and take steps to address them.

## Research and Innovation

By supporting research that explores the root causes of gambling harms, effective treatment methods, and the socio-economic impacts of gambling, we can develop more targeted and effective interventions. This research is vital for creating policies and practices that genuinely benefit our communities.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) has called for the development of a pan-Canadian strategy to address gambling-related harm, addressing the following issues:

- The need for national standards governing the promotion and availability of gambling
- Problematic conflicts of interest among gambling stakeholders
- Inadequate funding for gambling harm prevention and reduction initiatives and research across jurisdictions
- The absence of any systematic monitoring of changes in gambling-related harm, including any assessments of the social and economic costs of gambling
- The need to increase awareness of gambling-related harms among health and social service professionals and the public

## Building a Resilient Community

Ultimately, we want to foster a community that can withstand the challenges posed by gambling. We invite you to join us in this journey towards a healthier, more vibrant Nova Scotia. Whether you are a policymaker, educator, parent, business owner or concerned citizen, your involvement is crucial. Together, we can create a future where gambling does not overshadow the potential and well-being of our communities.





# RESOURCES

**This section contains links to support services, educational materials, references to document sources mentioned in the report, a bibliography for further reading, and concludes with appendices.**

# SUPPORT

*Feel free to reach out to these resources for assistance and more information on gambling harms and support services. GRINS does not have expertise in these areas and we do not endorse or recommend any particular service. Use at your own discretion.*

## Helplines

### **9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline**

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 9-8-8. Help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Nova Scotia Health Authority**

Mental Health and Addictions Services

Main Website: <https://mha.nshealth.ca/en/services> or <https://www.mhahelpns.ca/>

Crisis line: 902-429-8167 or 1-888-429-8167 (toll free). Available to help 24/7

Intake Line: 1-855-922-1122 (M-F 8:30-4:30. Tues and Thurs until 8pm)

Adolescent Outreach Services (12 -19yrs) AOS is 100% confidential.

<https://mha.nshealth.ca/en/services/adolescent-outreach-services>

### **National Problem Gambling Helpline**

Contact: 1-800-522-4700

### **First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Helpline (24/7)**

<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

Contact: 1-855-242-3310

### **NISA Helpline (11am to 11pm Atlantic Time)**

Free, anonymous, and confidential peer support available to Muslim women.

1-888-315-6472

<https://nisahelpline.com/>

### **Kids Help Phone (24/7)**

Contact: 1-800-668-6868

or Text CONNECT to 686868

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>



## Support Services

### Gamtalk

Online support for gambling issues. Free and anonymous.  
<https://www.gamtalk.org/>

### RecoverMe App

RecoverMe is a mobile app that helps you manage a gambling problem. Use the code RECOVERME100 to use the app for free.  
[Download on the Apple App Store](#)  
[Download on the Google Play Store](#)

### Canadian Mental Health Association

Contact: 1-902-466-6600  
Website: CMHA Nova Scotia <https://novascotia.cmha.ca/find-help/>

### Gambling Therapy (Free service worldwide)

<https://www.gamblingtherapy.org/support/>

### Gamblers Anonymous

Contact: 1-855-222-5542  
<https://gamblersanonymous.org/ga/addresses>  
Scroll down to CANADA - NOVA SCOTIA

### Access Wellness Nova Scotia (Telus Health)

Access Wellness is a free single-session supportive counselling service for individuals, couples or families. Visit <https://go.lifeworks.com/access-wellness-nova-scotia-en> and click the chat icon or call 1-833-691-2282 and tell us your concerns. Our support team will help you find the right type of support.



## Educational Resources

### Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA)

While most people who gamble do so without developing problems, it does pose potential risks and health concerns for some. For this reason, CCSA conducts research and develops materials designed to help Canadians make informed, responsible choices about their gambling in general and in specific situations or circumstances that are particularly risky, such as when they are consuming alcohol or other substances.  
<https://www.ccsa.ca/gambling>

### The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Gambling, Gaming and Technology Use

We support mental health and addictions service providers through training and education, developing digital tools and resources, and facilitating knowledge sharing.  
<https://kmb.camh.ca/ggtu/>

## **Gambling Risk Informed Nova Scotia (GRINS)**

Contact: [info@grins.info](mailto:info@grins.info)

General Info: <https://gamblingriskinformednovascotia.ca/>

For Youth: <https://gamblingriskinformednovascotia.ca/odds-and-ends-youth-workshop>

## **Resource for Businesses Who Want to Move Away from VLTs**

This is an interactive workshop, designed by the Acadia Centre for Entrepreneurship, that you can work through to learn how to replace risky revenues with other sources that maintain or enhance profitability.

<https://gamblingriskinformednovascotia.ca/tools-for-business>

## **International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviours**

The Centre at McGill University is involved in research, prevention, and the training of researchers and professionals concerned with youth gambling, treatment and public policy. There are resources for adolescents and for parents. <http://youthgambling.com>

## **Kings Investigative Workshop**

A series of eight detailed articles about the impact of VLTs on Nova Scotia. (2022).

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## **Responsible Gambling Council (RGC)**

The Responsible Gambling Council (RGC) is dedicated to reducing gambling risks through innovation, awareness and improved safeguards. We believe that gambling should never come at a human cost. Find out how we're promoting safer gambling in communities around the world, helping industry stakeholders mitigate risk and minimize harms and uncovering new insights about gambling and its impact on people, businesses and communities.

Contact: [info@rgco.org](mailto:info@rgco.org)

Website: <https://www.responsiblegambling.org/>



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**Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness.** (2016). *2013 Nova Scotia Adult Gambling Information Collection Project.* <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/publications/Adult-Gambling-Information-Collection-Project-2013.pdf>

9.3% of past year gamblers at risk for gambling-related harm contributed 42% of gross gambling revenues (GGR) in 2012–2013, with 0.9% providing approximately one-fifth of GGR.

**Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation.** (2023). Annual Report 2022-2023. Retrieved from <https://gamingns.ca/report/annual-report-2022-23/> For other years, see: <https://gamingns.ca/reports/annual-reports/>

The annual report of the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation, detailing financial performance and social responsibility initiatives.

**Nova Scotia Office of Addictions and Mental Health.** (2023). Accountability Report. Retrieved from <https://beta.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/1-3484/accountability-report-2022-23-office-addictions-and-mental-health-en.pdf>

An overview of mental health services in Nova Scotia, with a reference to creating curriculum for Middle School students on substances, gambling and mental health.

**Responsible Gambling Council.** (2021). Annual Report on Gambling Research. Retrieved from <https://www.responsiblegambling.org/about-rgc/annual-report/>

An annual summary of key research findings related to responsible gambling practices and policies.

**Rotermann, M, & Gilmour, H.** (August 9, 2022). *Who gambles and who experiences gambling problems in Canada.* Insights on Canadian Society. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2022001/article/00006-eng.htm>

This study examines gambling and gambling problems among people aged 15 or older, using data from the 2018. Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), Gambling Rapid Response.

**Smith, A., Poon, C., Jones, G., & Thawer, Z.** (2021). *Understanding the odds: Gambling among BC youth aged 12-18.* McCreary Centre Society. [https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/understanding\\_the\\_odds.pdf](https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/understanding_the_odds.pdf)

This report explores online and in-person gambling among youth in British Columbia (BC). Nearly two thirds (63%) of BC youth aged 12-18 had gambled with or without money in the past year.

**van der Maas, M., & Nower, L.** (2020). Contradictions of responsible gambling policies and gambling provision in the context of rapid market expansion. *Gaming Law Review* 24(7). <https://doi.org/10.1089/glr.2020.0009>

A look at how “responsible gambling” policies are designed to remove responsibility from government and industry and blame the victims of gambling harms.

**Williams, R., & Wood, R.** (2016). *What Proportion of Gambling Revenue is Derived from Problem Gamblers?* Alberta Gambling Research Institute Conference. Banff, Alberta.

15% – 50% of gambling revenue comes from problem gamblers depending on the jurisdiction and time period.

**Young, M. M., McKnight, S., Kalbfleisch, L., Leon, C. Lusk, E., Smit Quosai, T., & Stark, S.** (2024). Gambling availability and advertising in Canada: A call to action. Prepared by Greo Evidence Insights. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. <https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2024-06/Gambling-Availability-and-Advertising-in-Canada-en.pdf>

Increased opportunities to legally gamble and increased gambling advertising are likely to result in short- and long-term gambling-related harms among Canadians, especially youth, young adults and other vulnerable populations. However, the notable lack of national or provincial/territorial monitoring and surveillance of gambling-related harms means that the impact of these large changes in gambling policy on the health of Canadians will be largely unknown

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

**Gambling Harm:** Negative consequences arising from gambling activities, including financial loss, mental health issues, and impacts on relationships and communities.

**VLT (Video Lottery Terminal):** Electronic gambling machines often found in bars and gaming establishments, offering various games of chance.

**Dependency:** A state of relying on or being controlled by a substance or behaviour, such as gambling, to the extent that it interferes with daily life.

**Dopamine:** A neurotransmitter in the brain involved in reward and pleasure systems, often associated with addictive behaviours.

**Captology:** The study of how computers and technology can be used to influence human behaviour, often applied in designing addictive gambling technologies. From the acronym CAPT: Computers as Persuasive Technologies.

**Gamblification:** The practice of including elements of gambling in computer games.

**Gamification:** The application of game-design elements and principles in non-game contexts to engage users, often used in digital environments to encourage behaviour that can mimic gambling.

## Appendix B: Key Figures and Details

### Financial Impact of Gambling on Families

**Debt Accumulation:** Families often face significant financial strain due to loans and credit card debt incurred from gambling. On average, families experiencing gambling harm can accumulate around \$10,000 in gambling-related debt (Banks et al., 2018).

**Loss of Savings:** Many families deplete their savings accounts to fund gambling activities, with an average loss of \$5,000 (Banks et al., 2018).

**Legal Costs:** Engaging in gambling can lead to legal troubles, resulting in an average of \$3,000 in legal fees for families dealing with gambling-related crimes (Banks et al., 2018).

### Health Impacts of Gambling

**Anxiety:** Chronic worry and stress related to gambling affect approximately 35% of individuals who gamble (Sahakian et al., 2022).

**Depression:** Persistent sadness and loss of interest are common, affecting about 40% of individuals who gamble (Sahakian et al., 2022).

**Substance Abuse:** Around 25% of individuals who gamble use alcohol or drugs to cope with their gambling habits (Sahakian et al., 2022).

## Appendix C: Survey Data

### Survey on Community Perception of Gambling Harm

#### Negative Impact on Community

78% of respondents believe gambling has a negative impact on their community (Rotermann & Gilmour, 2022).  
12% do not believe it has a negative impact.  
10% are unsure.

#### Personal or Known Affected Individuals

64% of respondents have been affected or know someone who has been affected by gambling-related issues (Rotermann & Gilmour, 2022).

## Appendix D: Case Studies

### The Tavern Case Study

**Background:** A local tavern removed VLTs and shifted its focus to community engagement.

**Outcome:** After an initial financial decline, the tavern experienced increased customer loyalty, community goodwill, and overall growth.

**Key Takeaway:** Removing gambling machines can lead to a more engaged and loyal customer base, enhancing long-term business success.

## Appendix E: Legislative Efforts

### Babstock Case Summary

**Overview:** The Babstock case challenged the Atlantic Lottery Corporation's practices regarding VLTs, reaching the Supreme Court of Canada (Supreme Court of Canada, 2020).

**Outcome:** The case highlighted the difficulty in holding gambling entities accountable due to protective legislation (Supreme Court of Canada, 2020).

**Implications:** There is a need for policy changes to ensure fair legal recourse for those affected by gambling harms (Supreme Court of Canada, 2020).

## Appendix F: Comprehensive Insights

### Impact of Gambling on Institutions

**Broken Trust:** Gambling harms extend beyond personal crises to undermine trust in key institutions like churches and schools. Embezzlement cases within these institutions can shatter community faith and reduce financial support (Banks et al., 2018).

**Vulnerable Institutions:** Institutions often rely on trust and goodwill. When funds are misused for gambling, it can lead to reduced financial contributions and hinder their ability to serve the community (Banks et al., 2018).

**Preventive Measures and Recovery:** Institutions can implement stricter financial controls and offer support to individuals struggling with gambling, including counseling and treatment referrals (Banks et al., 2018).

### Youth and Gambling

**Vulnerability:** Young people are particularly susceptible to gambling due to underdeveloped risk assessment and impulse control mechanisms in their brains (Derevensky et al., 2019).

**Influences:** The gamification of the Internet and social media, along with exposure to gambling through school events, increases the risk (Ipsos MORI, 2020; Korn, et al., 2005.).

**Preventive Measures:** Schools should educate students about gambling risks and provide alternative forms of entertainment (Derevensky et al., 2019).

### Dependency and Its Underpinnings

**Biological Aspect:** Dopamine plays a key role in addictive behaviours. The pursuit of dopamine highs can lead to gambling dependency (Sahakian et al., 2022).

**Psychological Aspect:** Gambling often fills a spiritual or emotional void. The temporary highs and lows offer a false sense of control and achievement (Saint Michael's Hospital, 2016).

**Technological Aspect:** Online gambling platforms use captology to create addictive environments through variable reward systems and social proof (Cemiloglu et al., 2020).

**Treatment Approaches:** Cognitive-behavioural therapy, medications, and support groups like Gamblers Anonymous are effective treatment methods (Saint Michael's Hospital, 2016).

### VLTs and Community Impact

**Combination with Alcohol:** The mix of VLTs and alcohol can lead to compulsive gambling, increasing dependency risks (King's Investigative Workshop, 2023).

**Economic Considerations:** While VLTs generate revenue, the social costs are substantial, affecting mental health, relationships, and the justice system (Williams, et al., 2011).

**Success Stories:** Legions and taverns have shown that removing VLTs can result in long-term community and financial benefits.

## The Role of Government and Policy

**Revenue vs. Responsibility:** The government faces an ethical dilemma between generating revenue from gambling and addressing its harms (Williams et al., 2011).

**Legal Challenges:** Protective legislation makes it difficult to hold gambling entities accountable (Supreme Court of Canada, 2020).

**Recommendations:** Policy changes should promote ethical gambling and support affected individuals (Williams et al., 2011).

## The Broader Community Impact

**Economic Drain:** Gambling extracts significant disposable income from the community, weakening local economies (Csernyik, 2021).

**Social Costs:** Gambling harms have ripple effects on families and communities, increasing demands on social services and healthcare (Lycan-Lang, 2022).

**Community Initiatives:** Community-level efforts are essential to address and mitigate gambling harms (Williams et al., 2011).

## Appendix G: Additional Case Studies and Stories

### Youth Leader's Perspective

**Story:** A youth leader in Nova Scotia highlights the hidden gambling issues among young people.

**Impact:** Long-term struggles and social stigma make it difficult for youth to seek help and recover from gambling dependency (Derevensky et al., 2019).

### Neurodivergency Advocate's Perspective

**Story:** A coach for neurodivergent individuals explains the link between traits like impulsivity and increased vulnerability to gambling harms.

**Support Strategies:** Specialized coaching and support systems tailored for neurodivergent individuals are necessary (Cemiloglu et al., 2020).

### Former Gambling Addict's Story

**Background:** A former gambling addict shares his journey from casual gambling to severe dependency and eventual recovery.

**Lessons Learned:** The importance of support systems and the challenges of overcoming gambling dependency are emphasized (Saint Michael's Hospital, 2016).

## **Appendix H: Statistics and Facts on Gambling in Nova Scotia**

### **Prevalence of Gambling**

Approximately 75% of Nova Scotians engage in some form of gambling each year (Source: Nova Scotia Health Authority, 2017).

Around 2.1% of the population is identified as having gambling problems, which translates to roughly 16,000 individuals (Source: Focal Research Consultants, 2008).

### **Economic Impact**

In 2022-23 Nova Scotians spent over \$1.4 billion dollars on gambling (Department of Service Nova Scotia, 2023). After prize payouts, the net loss was approximately \$395 million dollars.

Gambling generates approximately \$150 million in annual revenue for the province (Source: Government of Nova Scotia). However, the social and economic costs related to problem gambling, including healthcare, social services, and legal expenses, are estimated to exceed \$80 million annually (Source: Williams et al., 2011).

The overall economic benefit of gambling is often offset by the costs associated with treating gambling dependency and related social issues.

### **Youth and Gambling**

Studies indicate that 30% of young Nova Scotians have participated in some form of gambling. Among these young gamblers, about 5% show signs of developing gambling problems, influenced significantly by online gaming and social media platforms.

Youth gambling is often linked to other risky behaviours, including substance abuse and delinquency (Source: CAMH, 2019).

Early exposure to gambling can increase the likelihood of developing gambling problems later in life (Source: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016).

### **Gambling and Health**

People who experience gambling harms are more likely to suffer from mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. There is a strong correlation between gambling dependency and substance abuse, with many individuals using alcohol or drugs to cope with gambling related stress.

People who experience gambling harms are at increased risk for high blood pressure, insomnia, and gastrointestinal issues. The Nova Scotia Health Authority spends significant resources on treating gambling related health issues, which diverts funds from other essential health services.

Gambling dependency can lead to severe mental health crises, including suicidal ideation and attempts (Source: CCSA, 2020).

## **Community Impact**

Gambling related issues contribute to higher rates of family breakdown, financial instability, and homelessness. Communities with high densities of gambling facilities report increased incidents of crime and domestic violence.

Public health services face increased demand for mental health and addiction services due to gambling related harms. Families of people harmed by gambling often experience severe financial and emotional distress, further straining community resources. (Source: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016).

Social services in Nova Scotia are increasingly focusing on holistic approaches to support affected families

## **Demographic Insights**

Men are more likely than women to experience gambling problems, with higher rates observed among younger adults aged 18-34.

Lower income households are disproportionately affected by gambling related harms.

Indigenous communities report higher rates of gambling problems compared to the general population.

Educational initiatives targeting high-risk groups, such as youth and low-income families, are essential for effective prevention (Source: National Gambling Impact Study Commission, 1999).

## **Policy and Regulation**

Nova Scotia has implemented various harm reduction measures, including self exclusion programs and limits on the number of Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs). Despite these measures, there is ongoing debate about the effectiveness of current regulations and the need for more stringent policies.

The introduction of online gambling has presented new challenges for regulation and enforcement. Legislative measures to limit gambling advertising, especially those targeting vulnerable populations, are being considered to mitigate the harms associated with gambling (Source: Government of Nova Scotia, 2018).

## **Research and Initiatives**

Ongoing research by the Nova Scotia Health Authority and other organizations aims to better understand the social and economic impacts of gambling. Community based initiatives focus on providing education and support to those affected by gambling harms.

Innovations in treatment approaches, such as integrating traditional methods with modern therapy techniques, are being explored to improve outcomes for problem gamblers (Source: Griffiths, 2004).

Collaboration with international research bodies helps in implementing best practices and understanding global trends in gambling behaviour (Source: Responsible Gambling Council, 2021).

# OUR LOSS

**An overview of gambling and its  
community impacts in Nova Scotia**

[gamblingriskinformednovascotia.ca](http://gamblingriskinformednovascotia.ca)