

# SOURCE LINES

## Gambling: You Can Lose More Than Money

Usually, when I stop at the local convenience store, I find myself in line behind several people buying lottery tickets. When I stop for gas, I am routinely asked if I want a 649 ticket with my gas. Often I say, "Yes." Driving up Hwy. 400 I am routinely passed by buses covered in ads for Casino Rama, full of seemingly giddy middle aged and older men and women, heading no doubt to the Orillia casino. I know a group of men who spend considerable time reviewing strategies to pick their sports teams winners and losers, before heading off to play their Pro Line Lottery selections.

Sports pools, office lottery pools, internet gaming, a night out at the casino, a poker night with the boys are what many describe as harmless social activities to balance out heavy workloads and family responsibilities. But, it is also likely that many of you would also answer "yes" to the question: "Do you know someone for whom gambling has caused considerable problems in his/her life?"

One report, "Gambling in Canada 2005: Statistics and Context", describes gambling as a 13 billion dollars per year industry. Across Canada, there are more than 100 casinos, 87,000 gambling machines (slots and video lottery terminals (VLTs)), 33,000 lottery

tickets centres, 250 race tracks, and 25,000 licenses each year to run fund raising events. Added to these are numerous online gambling websites, many of which are run from offshore places, linking Canadians to a world-wide phenomenon. The Ontario Provincial Government is currently introducing legislation to re-



strict gambling related advertising on the internet in an effort to reduce the social harm caused by gambling in various forms.

The average Canadian household spent approximately \$500.00 on government lotteries alone in the past year. Gambling provides entertainment for many but it also impacts detrimentally on family stress, financial well being, lost work productivity, job losses, decreased quality of life, and health care expenses. These costs are estimated to be in the billions.

This newsletter, as well as an upcoming one in the Fall, is to assist you in recognizing when harmless fun turns into a problem that can fracture people and relationships.

### **Do you have a gambling problem?**

In the past 12 months:

- Have you felt concerned about your gambling habits?
- Have you spent more money or time on gambling than you could afford?
- Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or about what happens when you gamble?
- Have you felt the need to bet more and more money?
- When you were gambling, did you feel that you had to persist until you won?
- Have you tried to win back your losses by gambling more?
- Has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your household?
- Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?
- Have you lied to people important to you about how much you gamble?
- Have you claimed to be winning money when you were not?
- Have people criticized your gambling?
- Have you been absent from work due to gambling?
- Have you had money arguments that centered on gambling?
- Have you gambled to cope with loneliness, depression, stress or other negative feelings?
- Has gambling caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, you may want to look take a closer look at how you gamble. The more "yes" answers, the more you should be concerned.

Look for a follow up newsletter to further help you spot a gambling problem in yourself, or family member.

### **Did you know?**

- The odds of being struck by lightning is 600,000 : 1
- The odds of winning Lotto 649 is 14,000,000 : 1
- The odds of winning Super 7 is 21,000,000 : 1

If you are one of those average families in Canada who spend \$10 per week on lotteries this adds up to just over \$500 per year. If you were to invest this money at an annual return of 6%, you would have over \$7000 guaranteed after 10 years.

**If you are concerned about this issue for yourself or someone you care about please contact your Employee Assistance Counselling Service for a free and confidential discussion.**



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