

# Quick Facts – Responsible Gambling

(October 2009)

## Sharing responsibility for gambling

In Alberta, we all have a role to play in being socially responsible. For the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC), this means identifying and applying industry policies, regulations and best practices to the development of information and programs that help players gamble responsibly.

The AGLC, on its own and in partnership with Alberta Health Services (formerly AADAC), has developed several initiatives to help reduce the risk of problem gambling and inform Albertans about responsible gambling, including the following:

**Responsible Gambling Information Centers (RGICs)** – In 2006, the AGLC began opening RGICs on the gaming floors in casinos and at the Edmonton Northlands Racing Entertainment Centre (REC). Currently there are 16 RGICs: 15 in casinos and one at Northlands.

**Player Awareness Terminals (PATs)** – Installed in all RGICs, the *PATs* feature a series of interactive screens offering a self-test, educational information and tips to gamblers on how to develop personal responsible gambling guidelines.

**Cost of Play Calculators** – Cost of Play Calculators are accessed through the RGICs and are a useful tool for showing the average cost of playing slots and table games. The calculator shows the average amount per hour, per month and per year that players will spend.

**Responsible Gambling Awareness Week (RGAW)** – RGAW is an annual initiative of the AGLC, Alberta Health Services (AHS) and other industry partners. RGAW is an opportunity to educate the public about responsible and problem gambling and highlight the responsible gambling initiatives undertaken by the AGLC and its industry partners.

**The VLT Responsible Gambling Awards** – An annual program for VLT retailers and their staff that recognizes the award recipient's participation in responsible gambling initiatives.

**Responsible Gambling Features on VLTs** – Added to VLTs in 2003-04, Responsible Gambling Features include pop-up reminders, a 24-hour clock and a display that tracks funds wagered. Responsible Gambling Features on VLTs help players stay aware of time expended and money spent.

**Self-Exclusion (SE) Program** – Individuals can choose to have themselves voluntarily banned from entering casinos and racing entertainment centres.

**Reel Facts** – Part of the AGLC SMART online training programs, *Reel Facts* is an updated version of the former 'Winning Moments' responsible gambling awareness training program for VLT retailers and their staff.

...2

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(October 2009)

**Deal Us In & A Good Call** – Also included in the AGLC SMART online training, *Deal Us In* and *A Good Call* are responsible gambling awareness programs for casino and REC, and bingo staff, respectively.

**Information Materials** – Brochures, posters, and a series of self-tests provide information to gamblers in casino, VLT and bingo venues, on how to gamble responsibly. All materials include the AHS Addiction Help Line number.

## **Problem & Responsible Gambling Strategy: ‘Both Sides of the Coin’**

This five-year strategy was developed by the AGLC in partnership with AHS and in collaboration with key stakeholders. The strategy outlines a framework for the continuing development of the AGLC’s and AHS’s jointly sponsored responsible gambling programs.

**Minors Awareness Campaign for Lottery Tickets** – This annual campaign reminds retailers not to sell to minors and to ensure identification is requested from those appearing to be under 18 years of age. The campaign also educates the general public and adults who purchase lottery tickets about their responsibility to not purchase tickets for minors.

## **Responsible Gambling Tips**

Following are some suggestions to help you manage your gambling as a source of entertainment:

- Remember, the house always has the advantage.
- Before playing, educate yourself on how the game works.

- Use only money from your entertainment budget.; do not borrow money to gamble.
- Know the warning signs of problem gambling and seek help if necessary.
- Do not try to “win back” losses by playing longer. Accept losses and stop gambling.
- Take frequent breaks.
- Balance gambling with your other leisure choices.
- Always! Set a limit. Stay within it.

## **Signs of gambling problems**

Here are some warning signs that gambling has become a problem:

- Spending longer periods of time gambling.
- Placing larger, more frequent bets.
- Going into debt to support gambling activities.
- Arguing about gambling with friends or family.
- Pinning great hope on the “big win”.
- Feelings of guilt or remorse about gambling.
- Participating in illegal activities to obtain money.
- Missing work to gamble.
- Hiding involvement in gambling activities.

## **Cost of Play**

**Remember that gambling is a form of entertainment and not a way to make money.**

Games of chance come at a cost to you, the player. Casino gaming should not be viewed as a way to make money.

...3

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(October 2009)

## Myths about gambling...what you should know

### Myth # 1

**Machines go on ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ streaks.**

**Fact:** VLTs and slot machine games are designed and programmed to pay out randomly. There is no way to predict when a payout will occur, or how much it will be. The result of the last game **does not influence** the result of the next game.

### Myth # 2

**Players can control the outcome of VLTs and slots by “playing strategically.”**

**Fact:** It is impossible to control the outcome of any spin. In fact, the outcome is determined as soon as the player pushes the button or pulls the lever.

### Myth # 3

**Gambling isn’t a problem as long as you can afford it.**

**Fact:** Gambling, like anything, becomes a problem when it has a negative effect on you or your family.

### Myth # 4

**You can “win back” heavy losses at slots, VLTs or tables by playing longer.**

**Fact:** The house is favored to win over the long run. The longer you play, the more money you will spend over time. **Don’t “chase your losses” with more gambling.**

### Myth # 5

**Losing streaks don’t last forever. Keep playing and you’ll win it back.**

**Fact:** The longer you play, the more you’ll pay. Period.

### Myth # 6

**Playing the same lottery numbers every week gives you a greater chance at winning...**

**Fact:** All numbers have the same chance of being selected for every draw. Your chance of winning a lottery is the same whether you pick your numbers or choose a quick pick method.

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## THE AGLC and AHS

**Partners in promoting responsibility, moderation and education**

The AGLC and AHS work together to raise awareness of problem gambling, and to promote responsible gambling behaviours.

AHS’s prevention, education and treatment programs are funded by the **Alberta Lottery Fund**.

Alberta Health Services Addiction Help Line:

**1-866-332-2322**