

**TO:** CITY MANAGER 2004 JUNE 1  
**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING FILE: 47000 20  
**SUBJECT:** PROBLEM GAMBLING RESEARCH IN BRITISH COLUMBIA  
**PURPOSE:** To provide Council with information on problem gambling research in British Columbia.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** Council forward this report to the Community Policing Committee and the Social Issues Committee for information.

**R E P O R T**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

At its meeting of 2004 March 22, Council received a copy of a letter from the City of Coquitlam to Premier Gordon Campbell urging the Provincial Government, directly and through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM), to create an independent provincial research organization similar to the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. Although the City of Coquitlam did not request Burnaby's endorsement of its request to the Province, the letter did indicate that copies had been forwarded to the UBCM and to all municipalities in British Columbia. Arising from the correspondence, Council requested a brief staff report on the issue. This report responds to Council's request.

**2.0 THE ALBERTA GAMING RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

The Alberta Gaming Research Institute was established in 2000 as a partnership between the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge. Its primary purpose is to support and promote academic research into gaming and gambling in Alberta, in order to significantly improve knowledge about how gambling affects society. The Provincially-funded Institute is committed to achieving national and international recognition for its role in building the knowledge base in gambling-related research. It endeavours to achieve its purpose through sponsoring specific research initiatives, building research capacity at the partner universities, organizing conferences, and disseminating information in both print and electronic form. The Institute is governed by a Board of Directors composed of representatives from each of the partner universities and the Alberta Gaming Research Council, an organization which was established to help direct the research activities of the Institute.

Since its inception, the Institute has sponsored a number of gambling related conferences and presentations, and undertaken and/or funded thirty-seven research projects. A complete list of the research projects is provided as Appendix 1, *attached*. A number of the projects focus on problem gambling. Given that the Institute is aiming for national and international recognition in the gambling research field, it can be assumed that the conclusions from many of the studies will be valid in jurisdictions other than Alberta. Thus, governments, the gaming industry, charitable organizations and other stakeholders in British Columbia will be able, in all likelihood, to benefit from the work undertaken by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. Results from research projects which have been completed are available through the Institute and on its website at [www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca](http://www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca). The website also provides access to a gambling-related library, the Institute's newsletter, an archive of media articles on gambling, and upcoming events which focus on gambling awareness and prevention.

It should be noted that the Alberta Gaming Research Institute is not the only institution of its kind. Staff are aware of three similar bodies in Ontario - the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre, the Problem Gambling Research Group, and the Responsible Gambling Council. There are undoubtedly other such institutes in Canada and in other countries.

### **3.0 PROBLEM GAMBLING RESEARCH IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

#### **3.1 *Responsible Gambling Framework/Strategy***

British Columbia's new Gaming Control Act was passed in August 2002. It provides a legislative framework for regulating and managing all of British Columbia's gaming activities. Among other things, the Act entrenches the Province's obligation to address problem gambling, in order to minimize the negative impacts of gambling on families and communities.

In February 2003, to satisfy its obligation, the Province initiated a Partnership for Responsible Gambling with the British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC) and gaming service providers, and adopted a Responsible Gambling Framework/Strategy. The framework is intended to promote responsible gaming practices and to address problem gambling in a co-ordinated way. It is based on a number of goals, two of which pertain to research, as follows:

- to develop a research program that will provide evidence to determine and improve effectiveness of prevention, training and treatment services, and perform ongoing program evaluation; and

- to undertake regular consumer and market research to track and assess issues relating to the prevalence of problem gambling in the general population - and particularly among youth - and to assess the impact which gaming activities, marketing and advertising have on various populations.

Other goals of the Responsible Gambling Framework/Strategy, as well as the elements of the Province's Problem Gambling Program, are outlined in Appendices 2 and 3, *attached*.

With respect to research, the focus of the Partnership since its establishment in 2003 has been as follows:

- assessment of the effectiveness of the problem gambling awareness campaign;
- assessment of public awareness of services and supports available for problem gamblers;
- assessment of public awareness of the BCLC's Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program<sup>1</sup>;
- collection of data on calls to the Provincial Problem Gambling Help Line;
- collection of data on people seeking help from problem gambling counsellors;
- sponsorship of a Problem Gambling Prevalence Study in 2003; and
- sponsorship of a problem gambling research project in the Lower Mainland, about which more detail is provided below.

### 3.2 *Problem Gambling Research Project In the Lower Mainland*

In April 2004, the Provincial government announced a problem gambling research project involving four Lower Mainland communities: Vancouver, Surrey, and the Langleys. The research project will examine the social and economic impacts of gambling, particularly as they relate to the relocation of casinos or the introduction of slot machines. The four communities were chosen based on recent decisions to expand gaming within their boundaries, and the resulting opportunity to select social and economic indicators which can be measured before expansion and at intervals after expansion. It is expected that the research project will begin in 2004 June, and continue through to 2006 March, with a possible extension of one year to 2007 March. Variables to be monitored during the research include:

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<sup>1</sup> Under this program, an individual who is experiencing problems with gambling can voluntarily apply to be excluded from gambling facilities in British Columbia for a period of time ranging from 6 months to 3 years.

- health indicators e.g., demands on the health system, changes in suicide rates;
- problem gambling e.g., changes in numbers of calls to the Help Line from specific communities, changes in numbers of calls to the Help Line which can be attributed to increased access to gaming, changes in the numbers of individuals seeking treatment;
- crime rates e.g. changes in numbers and types of crime, impact on police service; and
- economic indicators e.g., changes in tourism rates, changes in entertainment and gaming venues.

When the research project is complete, the Province expects to use the data to inform problem gambling policy, program development and resource allocation.

#### **4.0 UBCM RESPONSE TO COQUITLAM RESOLUTION**

As noted above, the UBCM and all British Columbia municipalities received a copy of the City of Coquitlam resolution advocating the creation of an independent provincial gaming research organization. Staff at the UBCM have advised that during consultations with municipalities on gaming policy and legislation over the past several years, the need for an independent gaming research body has not been raised. The UBCM has contacted the City of Coquitlam and asked it to reframe its request to the Province as a resolution for the autumn 2004 UBCM Convention. Coquitlam has agreed to do so.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The City of Coquitlam is urging the Provincial government, directly and through the UBCM, to create an independent provincial research organization, similar to the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. The UBCM has requested that Coquitlam submit its request as a resolution to the 2004 UBCM convention; Coquitlam has agreed to do so.

The Alberta Gaming Research Institute, created in 2000 and funded by the government of Alberta, is a partnership of Alberta's three universities. It is committed to achieving national and international recognition for research which demonstrates how gambling affects society. The Institute has undertaken and/or funded thirty-seven research projects focusing on gambling, the conclusions of which are likely applicable to jurisdictions outside Alberta. The results of those research projects which have been completed are available through the Institute and on its website.

As part of its Responsible Gambling Strategy, the Provincial Government recently announced a problem gambling research project which will focus on four Lower Mainland municipalities over the next two or three years. The project will examine the social and

economic impacts of gambling, particularly as they relate to the relocation of casinos or to the introduction of slot machines. It is hoped that the results of the study can help to inform future decision-making in British Columbia about gaming policy and problem gambling. Future decision-making is also likely to benefit from future research undertaken as part of the British Columbia's Responsible Gambling Strategy, and from research sponsored by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute and other similar bodies in Ontario and elsewhere.

It is recommended that Council forward this report to the Community Policing Committee and the Social Issues Committee for information.



J.S. Belhouse, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JS/sla  
Attachments

cc: Deputy City Manager  
Director Finance  
OIC - RCMP

**ALBERTA GAMING RESEARCH INSTITUTE**  
**RESEARCH PROJECTS**  
*(2003/04, 2002/03, 2001/02, 2000/01)*

<b>RESEARCH PROJECTS (Year 2003/04 Grants) - SUMMARY</b>			
<b>Grant #</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Principal Investigator(s)</b>	<b>Status</b>
37	Examining gambling and problem gambling in Albertan aboriginal communities	Dr. Rob Williams	In Progress
36	An exploratory study of the influence of gaming revenue on Alberta amateur sport organizations	Dr. Daniel Mason Ian Reade Dr. Garry Smith Dr. Lucie Thibault	In Progress
35	A transtheoretical perspective on individual determinants of help-seeking for and change in gambling problems	Dr. David Hodgins	In Progress
34	Validation of the gambling cognitions inventory	Dr. David Hodgins	In Progress
33	A review of technical aspects of customer-centric Internet gaming literature	Dr. Behrouz Homayoun Far	In Progress
32	An empirical approach to developing low-risk gambling guidelines	Dr. Shawn Currie	In Progress
31	Regulating Internet gambling through the banking and credit industry	Dr. Peter Bowal	In Progress

<b>RESEARCH PROJECTS (Year 2002/03 Grants) - SUMMARY</b>			
<b>Grant #</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Principal Investigator(s)</b>	<b>Status</b>
30	Using On-Line Survey Techniques to Profile the Internet Gambler: A Pilot Study	Dr. Robert Wood	In Progress
29	Prevention of Problem Gambling: A School-Based Intervention	Dr. Robert Williams Dr. Shawn Currie Dr. Robert Wood	In Progress
28	Economic Analysis of Alternative Betting Duty Regimes	Dr. W. David Walls	In Progress
27	The Effect of Culture on Gambling	Dr. Gordon Walker	In Progress
26	Gambling, Identity & Community: Evaluating the place of change in the formation of moral cultures	Dr. William Ramp	In Progress

<b>RESEARCH PROJECTS (Year 2002/03 Grants) - SUMMARY con't</b>			
<b>Grant #</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Principal Investigator(s)</b>	<b>Status</b>
25	Developing a Gambling Awareness and Prevention Program: Impacting Gambling Behavior in Prison Populations	Dr. Gary Nixon	In Progress
24	Problem Gambling in the Asian-Canadian Community in Calgary	Dr. Daniel Lai	In Progress
23	The Influence of substance dependence and mood disorders on outcome from pathological gambling	Dr. David Hodgins	In Progress

<b>RESEARCH PROJECTS (Year 2001/02 Grants) - SUMMARY</b>			
<b>Grant #</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Principal Investigator(s)</b>	<b>Final Report Expected</b>
22	Proportion of gaming revenue derived from problem versus non-problem gamblers	Dr. Robert Wood	In Progress
21	Using police files to assess gambling impacts	Dr. Garry J. Smith	Project Complete
20	A preliminary analysis of video lottery terminal gambling in Alberta	Dr. Garry J. Smith	Project Complete
19	Opportunistic screening and intervention strategies for problem gamblers in the emergency department: an exploratory study	Prof. Donna L. Smith Dr. Sharon Ann Warren	Project Complete
18	High quality aging or gambling with health? The lifestyles of elders who play bingo: Supplementary study	Dr. Sandra O'Brien Cousins	Project Complete
17	Seniors and gambling: Towards a better understanding	Dr. Gary Nixon	In Progress
16	Alberta retirees who gamble: Entertainment or problem	Dr. Brenda Elizabeth Munro	Project Complete
15	Understanding how gamblers really think: Psychological and cultural aspects that motivate gamblers	Dr. Virginia McGowan Dr. Gary Nixon	In Progress
14	Effects of a motivational interview on problem gambling behaviour	Dr. David Hodgins	In Progress

<b>RESEARCH PROJECTS (Year 2001/02 Grants) - SUMMARY con't</b>			
<b>Grant #</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Principal Investigator(s)</b>	<b>Final Report Expected</b>
13	Psychophysiological and subjective responses in video lottery gamblers	Dr. David Hodgins	Project Complete
12	Casino patrons, travel behaviour, place attachment and motivations: A study of Alberta residents	Dr. Tom Hinch	Project Complete
11	Functional magnetic resonance imaging of pathological gamblers	Dr. David Crockford	In Progress
10	Impact of statistical knowledge on gambling attitudes and behaviour of university students	Dr. Dennis Connolly Dr. Robert Williams	Project Complete

<b>RESEARCH PROJECTS (Year 2000/01 Grants) - SUMMARY</b>			
<b>Grant #</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Principal Investigator(s)</b>	<b>Final Report Expected</b>
9	Prevention of pathological gambling	Dr. Robert J. Williams Dr. Virginia McGowan	Project Complete
8	Measuring Gambling and Problem Gambling in Alberta Using the Canadian Problem Gambling Index	Dr. Garry J. Smith	Project Complete
7	Association between pathological gambling and suicide attempt/ideation	Dr. Stephen C. Newman	Project Complete
6	A social history of gambling in Alberta to 1970	Dr. Christopher Hosgood	In Progress
5	Preventing relapse in former gamblers	Dr. David Hodgins	Project Complete
4	How near wins and near losses affect gamblers' self-perceptions, risk estimations, and future gambling behaviour	Dr. Michael Enzle	In Progress
3	Gambling craving and its relation to addiction and personality	Dr. Nady el-Guebaly	Project Complete
2	High quality aging or gambling with health? The lifestyles of elders who play bingo	Dr. Sandy O'Brien Cousins	Project Complete
1	A consumer model for the regulation of gaming	Dr. Peter Bowal	In Progress



**GOALS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S  
RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING FRAMEWORK/STRATEGY**

To advocate for public policy that addresses the wider social and economic impacts of gambling and promotes responsible gambling strategies.

To raise public awareness of potential problems related to excessive gambling, to raise awareness of problem gambling programs and services, and to promote healthy choices and practices.

To develop a research program that will provide evidence to determine and improve the effectiveness of prevention, training and treatment services, to develop evidence-based materials and resources, and to perform ongoing program evaluation.

To undertake regular consumer and market research to track and assess issues relating to the prevalence of problem gambling in the general population - and particularly among youth - and to assess the impact which gaming activities, marketing and advertising have on various populations.

To develop a training curriculum to enhance the skills of those delivering problem gambling services and those working in the gaming industry.

To develop a comprehensive system of information collection and reporting that informs all components of the responsible gaming strategy.

To develop an accountability framework with outcome measures that will provide ongoing evaluation of all components and take corrective action when indicated.

To develop a range of accessible problem gambling treatment services.

To encourage and support the development of policies and practices that inhibit harmful gambling in the general public while supporting a sustainable gaming industry.

To reduce risk practices among those who choose to gamble, and to reduce the incidence of problem gambling, especially among vulnerable populations such as youth.

**BRITISH COLUMBIA PROBLEM GAMBLING PROGRAM**

The Province of British Columbia provides \$4 million annually to fund a problem gambling program. The program consists of the following components:

- community-based counselling services, provided under contract by community agencies (in Burnaby, such services are provided by Family Services of Greater Vancouver);
- a twenty-four hour toll-free province-wide Help Line;
- education and awareness materials including a web site at [www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca](http://www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca), and brochures, help-line stickers and posters, and other program information available at casinos, commercial bingo halls and lottery retail outlets;
- advertising and marketing standards for the gambling industry;
- research and education initiatives;
- an illegal gambling strategy, including an illegal gambling enforcement unit; and
- a gambling counsellor and industry personnel training program.