

Rational actors, irrational actions:

Contradictions of the Ontario Lottery Corporation's responsible gaming policy and the prevention of problem gambling

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Background

- Provincial gambling providers frame Responsible Gambling as enabling responsible choices for patrons
 - “To educate and enable current and future players to make informed decisions and develop responsible play habits, and to provide support for those who seek assistance” – *OLG Responsible Gambling: Policies and Procedures*

Technological Advancements

Good: Technological advancements can be used to improve RG strategies. Tracking, automatic RG messaging, identify of self-excluders

Bad: Technological advancements allow for greater availability of gambling, less effective restrictions, and greater rates of play

Province of Ontario has announced plans to introduce lottery retail to multilane retailers (e.g. Walmart)

Introduction of online casinos and mobile device apps

Transformation of games to increase rate of play

Technology is incorporated in such a way as to introduce gambling to more spaces and make gambling easier to access in those spaces where it already exists.

TapTix vs VLT



Renaming of technologies has allowed spread of previously banned forms of gambling

Promotion vs. RG messaging

Public health messages regarding addictive substances are only effective in improving outcomes where they are the dominant message

E.G. Smoking cessation programs in Ontario

Plain packaging, removal of point of purchase displays, restrictions on advertising

Advertising of gambling products far exceeds RG promotion

OLG Marketing and promotion 2016: \$332M

RG programs 2016: \$53.6M, RG messaging 2016: \$5.3M

The effect of information relevant to responsible gambling practices is made negligible by the dominance of gambling positive messaging.

Convenience store tobacco vs. gambling



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Privatization of gambling opportunities

Ontario has been increasing the use of private operators to provide gambling opportunities

Introduction of government monopolies is associated with lower harm and their removal is associated with increased harm in alcohol research.

State monopolies of gambling are marked by long term commitments to public health, rather than short term goals of private operators

E.G. The Great Canadian Lottery Corporation and the Toronto Casino: Currently part of an investigation on money laundering through their casinos in British Columbia.

Increased reliance of private operators and market principles in gambling provision limits the ability to enact responsible gambling strategies

ex: more difficult to introduce a central player tracking system

Conclusions

Responsible gambling is framed as encouraging consumers to act responsibly

Must be a core principle throughout provision strategy

Key features of the modernization plan discourage, rather than encourage responsible practices on the part of the consumer

Limiting choices to avoid or stop gambling activities by significantly increasing availability of gambling and focusing on higher rates of play

Negating the effect of RG information through the disproportionate focus on marketing

Increasing use of private operators which have less interest in promoting RG



Thank you!

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