

**Report to  
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health  
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa  
16 April 2018 / 16 avril 2018**

**and Council  
et au Conseil  
9 May 2018 / 9 mai 2018**

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**Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE      File Number: ACS-2018-OPH-HPP-0004**

**SUBJECT: A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO REDUCING HARMS FROM  
GAMBLING IN OTTAWA**

**OBJET: APPROCHE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES MÉFAITS  
ASSOCIÉS AU JEU DANS OTTAWA**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit:**

- 1. Approve Ottawa Public Health's collaborative four-point plan to reduce harms from gambling in Ottawa, conditional upon receiving funding**

outside of the current revenue-sharing agreement, as described in this report;

2. Authorize the Board of Health Chair to make a funding application to the Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to fund the proposed four-point plan; and
3. Direct that this report be forwarded to Council for information.

## **RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa :**

1. approuve le plan collaboratif en quatre volets de Santé publique Ottawa pour réduire les méfaits associés au jeu dans Ottawa, sous réserve de son financement en dehors de l'entente de partage des frais, comme il est décrit dans le présent rapport;
2. autorise le président du Conseil de santé d'Ottawa et/ou le médecin chef en santé publique à soumettre à la Province de l'Ontario une demande de financement du plan en quatre volets; et
3. demande que le présent rapport soit acheminé au Conseil municipal aux fins d'information.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In August 2013, the Ottawa Board of Health approved a report on the [Health and Social Impacts Related to Problems with Gambling in Ottawa](#). The report highlighted existing gaps in prevention and treatment services and identified a need for a coordinated, locally focused approach to prevent gambling-related harms and to increase funding to support a comprehensive approach to prevent gambling related harms, including increased funding to local treatment services and prevention and outreach initiatives.

Current consultations with local prevention and treatment agencies have identified that these gaps in prevention and treatment initiatives continue to exist, along with a lack of public awareness on the harms related to gambling. Similar to in 2013, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is concerned that an increase of gambling opportunities in Ottawa could have negative health and social impacts on some individuals who gamble, on their families, and within the broader community.

Research shows that increases in gambling availability are associated with a growth in problem gambling. Based on the near 2% prevalence of moderate risk and problem gambling in Ontario, there could be close to 15,000 adults in Ottawa with gambling problems. However, only about 540 individuals received gambling addiction treatment in Ottawa in 2016/17. This suggests most individuals needing treatment are not seeking support.

In 2013, the recommendations approved by Council focused largely on the gambling environment, specifically focusing on implementing 10 operating policies. Although these policies are still relevant and research continues to evaluate their effectiveness, gambling-related issues are much broader than land-based casino venues. Over the past five years, the focus to prevent harms from gambling has shifted from examining solely the gambling environment to a broader public health approach. With the proliferation of online gambling, gambling technology and the expansion of land-based gambling and the associated harms from gambling, OPH is recommending the implementation of a collaborative public health approach to help mitigate and prevent gambling-related harms.

OPH is proposing a 4-point plan, which is evidence-informed and includes input from local prevention and treatment agencies, OLG, and HRCO. This plan seeks to address harms related to gambling in the community. The plan would involve:

- Establishment of a network to collaborate across sectors to reduce harms related to gambling;
- Increased awareness about the harms related to gambling and early warning signs and improved informed decision-making about gambling;
- Work with community partners to reach groups at higher risk of gambling problems and improved knowledge of local gambling treatment options; and
- Ongoing monitoring and surveillance related to problem gambling and harms related to gambling.

OPH is seeking \$150K in one-time provincial funding to support a health promotion campaign, outreach to residents at higher risk of gambling problems and the establishment of the Ottawa Gambling Harm Prevention Network. OPH is also seeking an additional \$200K in base provincial funding to support on-going work to reduce harms from gambling, which includes on-going outreach to residents with high risk for

gambling problems, youth prevention initiatives, monitoring and surveillance, and staffing support to the Ottawa Gambling Harm Prevention Network.

## RÉSUMÉ

En août 2013, le Conseil de santé d'Ottawa approuvait un rapport sur les [Répercussions liées aux problèmes du jeu sur la santé et sur le plan social à Ottawa](#). Le rapport mettait en relief les lacunes en matière de services de prévention et de traitement. Il soulignait le besoin d'une approche coordonnée et locale pour prévenir les méfaits du jeu et insistait sur la nécessité d'accroître le financement afin de soutenir une approche globale en la matière, notamment augmenter les fonds accordés aux services de traitement et de prévention locaux et aux programmes de sensibilisation.

Des consultations menées récemment auprès d'organismes locaux de prévention et de traitement ont indiqué que ces lacunes au chapitre de la prévention et du traitement et de la sensibilisation de la population en ce qui a trait aux méfaits du jeu existent encore. Comme en 2013, Santé publique Ottawa (SPO) appréhende l'élargissement de l'accès au jeu dans Ottawa et ses effets négatifs sur la santé et la vie sociale de certains joueurs, de leur famille et de l'ensemble de la collectivité.

Selon les études, plus le jeu est accessible, plus les problèmes de jeu sont importants. En se basant sur la prévalence de près de deux pour cent de joueurs à risque modéré et à problèmes en Ontario, Ottawa pourrait compter près de 15 000 adultes dans Ottawa aux prises avec des problèmes de jeu. Toutefois, environ 540 personnes ont été traitées pour des problèmes de dépendance au jeu à Ottawa en 2016-2017. Ces chiffres donnent à penser que la majorité des joueurs ayant besoin de traitement ne demandent pas d'aide.

En 2013, les recommandations approuvées par le Conseil portaient surtout sur les sites de jeu et mettaient l'accent sur la mise en œuvre de dix politiques opérationnelles. Quoique ces politiques demeurent pertinentes aujourd'hui et que la recherche continue d'en évaluer l'efficacité, les enjeux liés au jeu sont beaucoup plus vastes que la simple question des casinos terrestres. Au cours des cinq dernières années, nos efforts pour prévenir les méfaits associés au jeu ont débordé le cadre des sites de jeu et nous avons adopté une approche de santé publique globale. Considérant la prolifération du jeu en ligne, des technologies de jeux de hasard, l'expansion des casinos terrestres et les méfaits correspondants, pour atténuer et prévenir les méfaits liés au jeu, SPO recommande de mettre en œuvre une approche de santé publique collaborative.

SPO propose un plan en quatre volets fondé sur des données probantes et qui prend en compte la réflexion et les commentaires d'organismes locaux de prévention et de traitement, de la Société des loteries et des jeux de l'Ontario et de Hard Rock Casino Ottawa. Ce plan, qui vise à contrer les méfaits associés au jeu dans notre collectivité, comporte :

- La création d'un réseau de collaboration intersectorielle pour réduire les méfaits associés au jeu;
- Une plus grande sensibilisation de la population à l'égard des méfaits associés au jeu et de leurs signes précurseurs pour favoriser une prise de décision éclairée en ce qui concerne le jeu;
- La collaboration avec les partenaires communautaires pour atteindre les groupes les plus à risque et mieux les renseigner sur les options de traitement locales;
- Une surveillance et un suivi réguliers reliés aux problèmes de jeu et aux méfaits associés au jeu.

SPO demande 150 000 dollars de financement provincial ponctuel afin de réaliser une campagne de promotion sur la santé, de sensibiliser les joueurs les plus à risque de développer une dépendance au jeu et de créer un réseau de prévention des méfaits associés au jeu d'Ottawa. SPO demande également 200 000 dollars de plus en financement provincial de base afin de soutenir son travail pour réduire les méfaits associés au jeu, ce qui inclut un programme de sensibilisation visant les joueurs à risque élevé de dépendance, des initiatives de prévention auprès des jeunes, des activités de suivi et de surveillance et l'affectation d'employés au réseau de prévention des méfaits associés au jeu d'Ottawa.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2012, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) committed to expanding lottery sales to multi-lane retailers, OLG-branded Internet gambling, charitable gambling as well as to increase private sector delivery of lottery and gaming.<sup>1</sup>

In August 2013, the Ottawa Board of Health approved a report on the [Health and Social Impacts Related to Problems with Gambling in Ottawa](#), which included a request to the Ontario Ministry of Finance, OLG and the City of Ottawa for additional funds for local treatment service providers, prevention and outreach initiatives; and that the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care adopt a comprehensive approach to prevent gambling-related harm in Ontario. Through the 2013 report, the Board also approved Ottawa

Public Health's position against increasing access and availability of gambling in Ottawa, and recommended that, should such a facility be developed, that 10 operating policies be implemented in any future casino in Ottawa. These operating policies would contribute to reducing problem gambling, based on research commissioned by the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the Board recommended that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Public Health Ontario commission studies to evaluate the effectiveness of these public health policies and to strengthen provincial surveillance of populations at risk of gambling-related harm.

The aforementioned report was subsequently received by City Council, with Council approving that the successful proponent arising from the OLG's Request for Proposal process implement the 10 public health measures; the request for OPH to receive annual, on-going funding for gambling prevention and outreach with community partners was not approved. At the same meeting, Council approved that the City participate in the OLG's RFP process as a "host city" for a gaming facility, with the understanding that the only acceptable location for an expanded facility would be the current location at the Rideau Carleton Raceway (RCR).<sup>3</sup>

### **Current context for gambling expansion in Ottawa**

The past year has seen a number of new developments on this file. In May 2017, OLG announced that Hard Rock Casino Ottawa (HRCO) was selected as the service provider for the Ottawa area gaming zone and in September 2017, City Council approved the [Rideau Carleton Raceway \(RCR\), at 4837 Albion Road, as a Gaming Site](#). During this time, it was also announced that HRCO, a partnership between the RCR and Hard Rock International, was planning a multi-phased expansion to transform the current RCR to a casino that will include the existing racetrack. The expansion is expected to generate \$12.8 million in annual revenue for the City of Ottawa once it becomes operational.<sup>4</sup> Municipalities that host OLG sites receive a portion of the gambling revenues. The City of Ottawa received \$4.7 million in revenues for 2016.<sup>5</sup>

In 2015-2016, OLG generated more than \$2 billion in net profits for the Ontario government. Based on Ontario government policy, two percent of gross slot revenues earned at casinos and slot facilities are allocated to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). The allocation for the 2015-16 fiscal year was \$38 million<sup>6</sup>. The Ministry uses these funds to support research, treatment and prevention programs, including the Centre of Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), the Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO), and the YMCA's Youth Gambling Awareness Program.

In September 2017, in approving RCR as the gaming site, Council re-iterated the recommendations adopted in 2013 with respect to the 10 operating policies. In debating this item, Members of Council also requested that representatives of HRCO meet with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) to discuss responsible gambling approaches as they move forward with their projects.

In November 2017, the City of Ottawa's Committee of Adjustment approved an [increase in the maximum number of game tables](#) allowed at the location, from 21 to 35.

Most recently, in February 2018, HRCO filed an application to expand the facility to include a 2500 seat entertainment theatre, a hotel and an increase in live gambling tables from 35 to 55.<sup>7</sup> An increase in the number of Electronic Gambling Machines (EGMs) was also announced, but is not part of the expansion application to the City of Ottawa.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Ottawa Public Health: Building Partnerships and Gaining Knowledge***

Since 2013, OPH has sought to strengthen relationships with provincial research entities as well as local prevention and treatment agencies. To this end, OPH is a member of the Problem Gambling Coordinating Committee, a local clinically focused group including the YMCA's Youth Gambling Awareness Program (YGAP) and the four local gambling treatment providers funded by the Champlain Local Health Integration Network. To gain a greater understanding of the harms associated with gambling and the best practices to mitigate these harms, OPH has consulted with these partners and other organizations, such as the Responsible Gambling Council (RGC), the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), the Gambling Laboratory research hub at Carleton University and the Problem Gambling Helpline. OPH is connecting with Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO), drawing on their knowledge exchange service to support a public health approach to gambling, and participating in their new Community of Practice for Public Health Units.

Recently, OPH consulted with the Ottawa-Gatineau Responsible Gambling Committee (Comité du jeu responsable pour la région Ottawa-Gatineau) to understand the collaborative work between the Lac Leamy Casino, Loto-Québec and treatment providers. OPH, along with members of the Comité, attended a tour of the Lac Leamy Casino to learn about their responsible gambling initiatives and casino surveillance.

Furthermore, since the OLG announcement of the RCR and Hard Rock partnership, there have been ongoing meetings with OPH, HRCO and OLG to explore opportunities for collaboration.

## DISCUSSION

Outlined below are findings from OPH's work over the past year, specifically highlighting the need for a public health approach that works across the continuum of gambling to reduce the harms related to gambling. The supporting documents also provide an overview of the public health approach and evidence-informed best practices in responsible gambling strategies.

### Health and Social Harms Related to Gambling

An overview of the health and social impacts related to gambling is included in supporting document 1 and a summary of this information is outlined below.

Gambling is a common activity that has steadily expanded over the past 20 years and refers to both land-based and online gambling. Corresponding to this growth in gambling activity, there is evolving research demonstrating that there is a continuum of gambling behaviors and corresponding harms - similar to alcohol and other substance use. The gambling continuum is a spectrum, starting from no gambling, low-risk gambling (no or few negative impacts), moderate-risk and higher risk gambling (that causes some serious social harm) to the most problematic form - a gambling disorder. Harms can occur across the continuum. As gambling behaviour becomes more problematic, so does the severity of the mental and physical health impacts as well as the social and financial consequences. However, most of the harms from gambling occur with individuals involved in low to moderate-risk gambling.<sup>9</sup> This is due to the sheer number of individuals in those risk categories in comparison to the estimated 2% of individuals with problem gambling.

The health and social harms that can be experienced by people – across the gambling continuum – include: mental health issues, substance use, and addiction. Individuals who have developed problem gambling have higher incidences of depression, anxiety, attention deficit disorders and personality disorders. Suicide is a serious concern as individuals with problem gambling<sup>1</sup> report higher rates of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. As well, individuals with problem gambling are more likely to report substance use:<sup>10</sup>

- 5 times more likely to report tobacco dependence

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<sup>1</sup> Problem gambling is characterized by difficulties in limiting money and/or time on gambling that causes serious social harm. It includes moderate to severe gambling to the most serious form, a gambling disorder as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-5.

- 11 times more likely to report cannabis dependence
- 23 times more likely to report alcohol dependence

### *Estimates of Gambling Prevalence*

In Ontario, the prevalence of gambling declined significantly from 80% in 2000 to 68% in 2015. The prevalence of casino gambling declined significantly from 34% in 2000 to 25% in 2015. However, although the prevalence of gambling declined, the overall prevalence of moderate-risk and problem gambling in 2015 in Ontario was 1.7%, not significantly different from the 1.9% reported in 2005.<sup>11</sup> As well, the 2015 Ontario data is not significantly different from the 2007-2008 Ottawa data on the prevalence of moderate-risk and problem gambling, estimated at 2%.<sup>12</sup> A recent Nanos survey commissioned by HRCO found close to four out of ten Ottawa residents are concerned about “gambling addiction and the negative impacts of gambling”.<sup>13</sup>

In Ottawa, the four most common modalities of gambling for those over 18 years of age and who have gambled more than five times in the past year were: lottery tickets (45.4%), instant win (18.0%), cards/board games with family/friends (7.2%) and video-lottery terminals, such as slot machines (4.7%).<sup>14</sup>

### *At-Risk Populations*

Certain populations are more at risk of experiencing harms related to gambling. Some of the determinants of gambling harm summarized from the literature in [GREO's Mind Map](#) include socioeconomic (SES) groups, age (older adults, youth and young adults), ethnicity and substance use and addiction.<sup>15</sup> Additional information is outlined in supporting document 1.

In 2017, more than one third (34%) of Ottawa students reported gambling for money at least once in the past year, 4% report gambling more than 5 times in the past year and 3% report gambled \$50 or more at a time in the past year. In addition, a very small proportion (less than 2%) of Ottawa students were considered to have a gambling problem.<sup>16</sup> A 2012 survey in three Canadian provinces, including Ontario, found that 9% of youth are engaging in online gambling. A higher proportion of the youth responding to the 2012 survey scored higher in problem gambling severity than land-based only gamblers.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, an Ontario study found that students who report problem gambling behaviors show increased substance use, mental health issues, and delinquency/criminal problems similar to those seen among adults with gambling problems.<sup>18</sup>

### *Expanding Access and Availability of Gambling*

Gambling opportunities already exist in many forms in Ottawa, including online and in casinos. Both the RCR and Lac Leamy Casino are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The majority of researchers agree that certain forms of gambling are more problematic. Games that involve the illusion of skill or the experience of almost winning are more likely to be associated with gambling problems.<sup>19 20 21</sup> These types of games include casino table games and EGMs, such as slot machines.<sup>22 23</sup> In addition, EGMs are identified in the literature as generating a significant amount of revenue from people with gambling problems.<sup>24</sup> In 2017, the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline received close to 200 calls from Ottawa, 52 calls were from concerned family members and, overall, 48 calls were related to problems with EGMs.<sup>25</sup>

A summary of the literature by GREO shows that problem gambling rates increase immediately following a casino opening and in some cases rates return to normal over the long-term.<sup>26</sup>

Some research indicates that increased opportunities to gamble within a community may cause increases in problem gambling.<sup>27</sup> A recent U.S. study found increased gambling and problem gambling rates in areas with increased access to casinos and racetracks. The rates of gambling started to drop off beyond a 30-mile (48 kms) distance and rates of problem gambling started dropping at 20 miles (32 kms) from a casino.<sup>28</sup> A statewide study applied the relationship between access and problem gambling and found that US states with more exposure to legal gambling had greater rates of problem gambling. Specifically, more exposure to casino and lotteries was associated with higher rates of problematic gambling.<sup>29</sup>

OPH recommends against increasing access and availability of gambling in Ottawa, including EGMs and casino table games, as increasing access and availability has been shown to increase the prevalence of problem gambling. To mitigate potential harms to health from gambling expansion, OPH proposes that a collaborative public health approach be implemented, which considers the harms related to gambling.

### **A Public Health Approach**

An overview of a public health approach to gambling is included in document 2 and a summary is outlined below.

In 2013, the recommendations approved by Council focused largely on the gambling environment, specifically on 10 operating policies. Although these policies are still

relevant and research continues to evaluate their effectiveness, gambling-related issues are much broader than land-based casino venues. Over the past five years, the focus to prevent harms from gambling has shifted from the gambling environment to a broader public health approach.

In addition to the environment in which gambling occurs, a public health approach considers gambling across the continuum of use and seeks to implement evidence-informed interventions, depending on the level of gambling involvement and the harms occurring. This continuum of gambling ranges from no gambling, low-risk gambling, moderate to high-risk (defined as problem gambling) to a gambling disorder. Examples of harms include: poorer mental health, higher rates of substances use, loss of savings, relationship issues, as well as sedentary lifestyle.

Successful population-level public health approaches, such as those used in reducing harms from alcohol and tobacco, can inform an approach to reducing harms from gambling. A few examples of strategies are:

- Education and public awareness to ensure health care providers, educators, parents and the general public are aware of early warning signs of harms due to gambling;
- Regulating access to gambling in terms of online access, operating hours, and access to money; and
- Coordinating research, surveillance and exchange of information to understand the health impacts of gambling on the population.

In line with a broader public health approach, OLG and the Responsible Gambling Council (RGC) have implemented a nationally-recognized accreditation program to evaluate responsible gambling best practices at land-based venues and online. The RG Check Accreditation program evaluates gambling venues on the following eight core standards: corporate RG policies; self-exclusion; advertising and promotion; informed decision-making; assisting patrons who may have problems with gambling; access to money; venue and game features; and employee training. These standards include many of the 10 recommended operating policies from the 2013 Board of Health report. The RCR was accredited in February 2017 and its accreditation will be up for review in February 2020.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, considering the recommended public health approach and the developments in responsible gambling practices, OPH is seeking to support and enhance responsible

gambling (RG) efforts locally, through collaborative work with OLG and HRCO. As well, OPH is recommending local investments in a broader public health approach to gambling.

## **Current Prevention and Treatment Services**

### *Gambling Addiction Treatment Service Providers*

The Champlain Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) funds four local addiction treatment service providers in Ottawa; the Centretown Community Health Centre, Amethyst, the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre and Rideauwood. A total of 541 individuals received gambling addiction treatment in Ottawa in 2016/17<sup>31</sup>. Based on the near 2% prevalence of moderate risk and problem gambling in Ontario, there could be close to 15,000\* adults in Ottawa with gambling problems. This suggests that a large portion of those needing treatment are not seeking support.

In 2017, the four LHIN-funded gambling addiction treatment services in Ottawa were consulted and the overall findings were similar to the findings from 2013. Service providers continue to work together on the Problem Gambling Coordinating Committee (PGCC) to ensure resources are meeting the needs of clients and their families. Each Ottawa service provider has developed its own area of expertise in counselling, some offering group counselling and SMART Recovery groups while others focus on individual counselling and implementation of self-exclusion programs. Individuals seeking help for problem gambling are prioritized with those at higher risk being seen within a few days. The local treatment agencies also work collaboratively with the Casino du Lac Leamy and Loto-Québec to improve pathways to treatment and self-exclusion opportunities.

In addition to the treatment agencies in Ottawa, there are other services that support individuals experiencing problems with gambling and their families, including the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline, the Distress Centre and Gamblers Anonymous. More information is included in document 3 about prevention and treatment services in Ottawa.

### *Health Promotion and Prevention Service*

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\* Based on 2% of adult population 18+ experiencing moderate to severe gambling problems in Ottawa. Population Projections 2018, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, IntelliHEALTH Ontario, Date Extracted March 2018.

The [YMCA's Youth Gambling Awareness Program](#) (YGAP) is the only local organization in Ottawa offering bilingual gambling prevention messages. The program targets youth, teachers, community groups and parents. YGAP funding has also not changed in 10 years. In order to increase reach to vulnerable youth, it has developed partnerships with the Dave Smith Centre, Maison Fraternité and the Children's Aid Society.

#### *Coordinated approach to addressing gambling-related harm*

Overall, Ottawa prevention and treatment service providers recommended developing a coordinated approach to addressing gambling-related harms in Ottawa, which would include expanded health promotion and awareness activities related to gambling.

As a public health unit, with sufficient provincial funding, OPH can implement the following strategies to address the gap:

- Support the local efforts of the RGC to incorporate healthy public policy into the design and operations of gaming sites by working collaboratively through the Ottawa-based stakeholder committee.
- Disseminate a health promotion campaign to build awareness in youth and adult populations of gambling harms, early warning signs and safe gambling guidelines to enhance early detection and increase treatment-seeking.
- Integrate gambling prevention messages into current work to reduce substance use and promote positive mental health, promote healthy choices, reduce stigma in seeking support and improve knowledge of issue and local treatment options.
- Work with partners to increase monitoring and surveillance of population health data related to gambling.

**Recommendation 1 - That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit approve Ottawa Public Health's collaborative four-point plan to reduce harms from gambling in Ottawa, conditional upon receiving funding outside of the current revenue-sharing agreement, as described in this report.**

According to research, influencing the physical, sociocultural and environmental factors that can reduce harms from gambling requires strategic system partnerships, policy implementation, community health strategies and regulatory change at the local, provincial and federal levels.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, GREO supports applying principles of harm reduction, promoting healthy living, and protecting at-risk groups. In essence, "the

upstream approach [to address harms due to gambling] requires making changes to the causes, instead of only changing the effect”.<sup>33</sup>

OPH’s proposed four-point plan, outlined below, seeks to build a collaborative network to address harms across the gambling continuum and to support initiatives that will: increase awareness about problem gambling; address high risk groups; enhance pathways to treatment; and enhance monitoring and surveillance.

### **1. Ottawa Gambling Harm Prevention Network**

Key Activities:

- Enhance coordination and outreach, as per partners’ request, to strengthen partnership efforts between treatment providers, OLG and HRCO operators in order to provide residents a clear pathway to support and increase treatment referrals;
- Support the implementation of improvements, as recommended by the RG Check accreditation reports;
- Plan and implement evidence-based actions for early identification and to reduce the harms from gambling; and
- Monitor evidence and promising practices to enhance prevention and treatment supports.

The collaboration of treatment providers, Loto-Québec and Lac Leamy on the Ottawa-Gatineau committee has resulted in improved pathways to treatment and off-site casino self-exclusion. OPH has been in discussions with local treatment agencies, the YGAP program, OLG, and HRCO about establishing an Ottawa-focused committee to collaborate and replicate successes on prevention and treatment initiatives.

The establishment of this Network will facilitate dialogue, collaboration and problem-solving with stakeholders. The Network could include OLG, HRCO, prevention and treatment agencies, along with other interested stakeholders. Bringing together these various sectors can contribute to ensuring that interventions to reduce harms associated with gambling are based on the best available evidence and supported by the local community.<sup>34 35</sup> The proposed Terms of Reference for the Ottawa Gambling Harm Prevention Network, is outlined in document 4.

### **2. Increase awareness and capacity, with a focus on youth**

#### Key Activities:

- Support local prevention agencies to increase capacity and expand promotion and outreach of gambling prevention and awareness activities to youth, parents, and community groups, with a priority focus on youth at high risk for gambling problems, as requested by partners;
- Promote gambling prevention and informed decision-making with youth;
- Train youth community partners and OPH staff to integrate youth gambling and gaming issues into health promotion activities, as appropriate and feasible;
- Collaborate with provincial prevention initiatives, such as the RGC, to increase local awareness of harms related to gambling, early warning signs and safe gambling guidelines to improve informed decision-making; and
- Adapt stigma reduction mental health messages to increase seeking of support for gambling-related harms by individuals and families.

Gambling has become a common form of entertainment for youth. New online opportunities in gambling, sports betting and the popularity of poker have increased youth involvement<sup>36</sup>. Although a small proportion (less than 2%) of Ottawa students are considered to have gambling problems, they are particularly vulnerable to gambling-related harms such as increased substance use and mental health issues.<sup>37 38</sup> Additionally, children as young as 8 years old are participating in gambling activities online.<sup>39</sup> In an effort to increase awareness of the harms of gambling, as well as the myths and misconceptions of gambling, OPH will work with prevention partners, such as YMCA's YGAP, to increase capacity for outreach to youth, especially youth at high risk of gambling problems.

Enhanced gambling prevention messages, particularly following and/or in advance of the expanded casino, may help ensure people make informed decisions about gambling. In order to limit the impact of gambling-related harms for individuals, families and local communities, a health promotion campaign would focus on the existence of harms from gambling, safe gambling guidelines, early warning signs of problematic gambling and where to access support and treatment for gambling problems.<sup>40</sup>

### **3. Outreach to individuals at high-risk**

#### Key Activities:

- Work with treatment partners and other community partners to increase the number of people seeking treatment through awareness of and improved access to resources;
- Increase awareness by older adults, service providers and senior centres about the impact of gambling as a leisure activity;
- Increase capacity and awareness of gambling-related harms with intermediaries supporting populations at higher risk for harms due to gambling (e.g. older adults, low SES, and certain cultural groups); and
- Disseminate resources to service providers to increase their capacity to identify individuals experiencing problems with gambling and to support people to seek treatment.

The large gap between individuals receiving treatment and the prevalence of problem gambling in Ottawa supports both the need for more local awareness messages and the need for collaboration with partners to reduce inequities in higher risk groups.

Due to the stigma and shame many people associate with gambling problems, individuals may reach out for other support before getting help for gambling problems - such as help with their housing, financial problems or substance use issues.<sup>41</sup> As well, service providers may be unaware of the interrelated issues their clients may have due to gambling. Integrating gambling prevention messages into other health promotion work related to substance use and addictions can reduce stigma and improve help seeking behaviour.<sup>42</sup>

#### **4. *Monitoring and Surveillance***

Key Activities:

- Access additional Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) data, and potentially commission an ad-hoc survey to obtain local data on the harms associated with gambling;
- Continue to monitor Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS), RRFSS and an ad-hoc survey yearly in order to see trends;
- Monitor population health data related to gambling; and

- Promote knowledge exchange opportunities through the Responsible Gambling Council, Gambling Research Exchange and Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Regular population health assessments of problem gambling will enhance understanding of the issues in Ottawa and will facilitate tracking the impact of new initiatives. Furthermore, ongoing monitoring can help evaluate if awareness efforts are changing attitudes or behaviours.<sup>43</sup> OPH can also work with network partners to monitor responsible gambling efforts and increase monitoring and surveillance of population health data for gambling-related harms.

**Recommendation 2 - That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit authorize the Board of Health Chair to make a funding application to the Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to fund the proposed four-point plan.**

In order to implement this four-point plan to prevent harms from gambling, OPH is requesting a one-time investment and ongoing funding, as described below.

- One time investment of \$150,000 to support a locally developed and delivered health promotion campaign, initiate outreach to intermediaries working with populations at high risk for problematic gambling, and establish the Ottawa Gambling Harm Prevention Network.
- Ongoing investments of \$200,000 to support youth gambling prevention activities, outreach to high-risk groups, maintain the secretariat for the Network, and conduct long-term monitoring and surveillance activities: \$50 000 for Ottawa Gambling Harm Prevention Network Secretariat; \$50 000 for outreach with high-risk populations; \$50 000 for youth gambling prevention programming; and \$50 000 for ongoing monitoring and surveillance.

The effective prevention of harms from gambling requires multiple education and policy initiatives developed to address the specific needs of the cultural and demographic nature of Ottawa. The investment in awareness and education is expected to improve the public's understanding of harms related to gambling, early warning signs of problem gambling and improve help seeking behaviour. Investments in youth gambling awareness is prioritized given the online gambling environment and youth involvement in online activities. These investments are expected to expand the reach of an existing evidence-informed program promoting critical thinking about gambling and to leverage existing healthy lifestyle and positive mental health initiatives.

Awareness and educational initiatives are not effective on their own. Best practices recommend that addressing harms from gambling requires a combination of sustained educational initiatives and meaningful policy measures.<sup>44</sup> Establishing the Network will allow OPH and partners to monitor evidence and promising practices and to coordinate initiatives and leverage resources. Similarly, improved coordination between OLG, HRCO and treatment agencies is expected to improve pathways to treatment and support, which will reduce the impact of harms on the individuals gambling and their families.

Finally, regular surveillance of overall population prevalence of problem gambling and gambling involvement will assist in understanding the extent of harms in the community and inform public health interventions and community partner initiatives related to gambling.

The request for these funds is to bolster the prevention and treatment work that the MOHLTC funds at a time when risk of harms may increase in Ottawa and given the need for adaptation of messages and on-the-ground work to overcome barriers to treatment identified by the community.

**Recommendation 3 - That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit direct that this report be forwarded to Council for information.**

Given the proposal to expand the facility and access to gambling at the current RCR location at 4837 Albion Road, City Council is expected to consider reports later this spring being:

- An application for a zoning and official plan amendment under the *Planning Act* to be considered by Agricultural and Rural Affairs Committee at its meeting of May 3, 2018; and
- An Economic Impact Assessment, to be heard at Finance and Economic Development Committee at its meeting of May 1, 2018.

Accordingly, OPH staff is recommending that this Board of Health report be forwarded to Council for information in light of the upcoming reports to Committee and Council.

**RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

## **CONSULTATION**

Partner agencies were consulted in the development of this report.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to approving the recommendations outlined in this report.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The costs of implementing OPH's four-point plan are outlined in the report and will be conditional upon approval of funding, as described in this report.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

## **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

This report is consistent with Council's Strategic Priority with respect to Healthy and Caring Communities and with the Board of Health's Strategic Priority with respect to Healthy Public Policy.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 – Overview of the Health and Social Impacts Related to Gambling

Document 2 – Public Health Approach to Gambling

Document 3 – Gambling Prevention and Treatment Services in Ottawa

Document 4 - Proposed Terms of Reference for the Ottawa Gambling Harm  
Prevention Network

## **DISPOSITION**

Upon Board approval, this report will be forwarded to Council for information and a funding application will be submitted to the Province for financing to support OPH's 4-point plan, as outlined in this report.

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- <sup>3</sup> Ontario Regulation 81/12: Municipal requirements for the Establishment of Rideau Carleton Raceway as a Gaming Site. Finance and Economic Development Committee. Retrieved from: <http://app05.ottawa.ca/sirepub/cache/2/stqaggaom43h54sonhcl3aai/4703430829201710520243.PDF>
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