

No Regrets: Recognizing Gambling Issues and Staying Safe

By Diana Degan

Recent research by the Responsible Gambling Council (RGC) reveals that 70 per cent of Ontarians feel that gambling related problems have increased in the last few years and almost 44 per cent state that gambling has had a negative effective on the community.

On average, gamblers without problems spend just over one per cent of their personal income on gambling according to research done by the RGC and the Responsible Gambling Council Centre for the Advancement of Best Practices. People with severe gambling problems spend 21 per cent of their personal income, one-fifth of their total income.

“Almost all people who have gambling problems expect they will become a big winner,” said Jon Kelly, CEO, Responsible Gambling Council. “But the truth is, most players lose. It’s important to remember that all of these games, even those involving skill, include a large element of chance and they always favour the house. That’s why it’s so important to be informed and understand the risks. You want to walk away with no regrets whether you win or lose”.

Problem gambling impacts people’s lives in many ways – from personal relationships to work performance, from health issues to the ability to financially support oneself and family. Knowing how to minimize those risks is key to steering you clear of potential problems.

“It’s important for Ontarians to be aware of the potential for risks and have all the information to make informed choices about gambling,” said Paula Antoniazzi, Program Director, RGC. “It may seem like ‘just fun’, but there are people who look at gambling as a way to make money like a job. There are risks to gambling, but there are ways to limit those risks. It’s important to be realistic about your chances of winning and losing and to get help if you have a problem.”

If you choose to gamble, Ms. Antoniazzi says it’s important to be aware of how you manage your money and plan ahead so that you stay in charge and feel good about your choices.

This year, RGC has launched a free Cost2Play Calculator on their website, www.noregrets.ca. It can be difficult to track how much it costs to play games over time; small individual bets can add up. This free, online tool – also usable on smartphones -- helps people understand the long term costs involved for three popular games: slots, blackjack and roulette.

“The new Cost2Play Calculator will help the gambler understand just how much that ‘game’ is costing over time,” said Ms. Antoniazzi.

For more money management strategies, safer gambling tips, tips on recognizing signs of potential problem gambling and the new, free Cost2Play Calculator, go to www.noregrets.ca.

