

POLICY 7.1 Gambling Policy

PREAMBLE

Addiction to gambling has become a problem for a significant number of persons and for enough proportion of the population that it warrants our attention as a faith community. In their pastoral letter, *The False Eden of Gambling*, the Alberta bishops spoke of the moral aspects of this form of “recreation” both for the gambler and for those who profit from gambling.

(<http://www.wcr.ab.ca/WCRThisWeek/Stories/tabid/61/entryid/121/Default.aspx>)

This source of revenue has proven so successful that all provincial and territorial governments across Canada have accepted some form of gambling in their jurisdictions. Casino gambling, VLTs and high-stakes bingo are the cause of untold hardship for a minority of patrons who find themselves addicted to this form of “entertainment”, leading to the loss of jobs, house and home, and in dire circumstances, life itself.

- The government of Alberta funnels a portion of the earnings from gambling into the provincial treasury, where it is undistinguished from all other revenues, and from whence it is distributed to all ministries of the government. Total revenues in the provincial treasury in 2008 were \$39.582B, of which \$2.220B was garnered from gambling, or 5.6%. That proportion has risen since then, so that now (2010) the government of Alberta profits more from gambling revenue than from oil sands royalties.
- The Alberta Lottery Fund, which supports many community initiatives, invites charities and other non-profit societies to apply for funds which can be used for praiseworthy purposes. As a result, the government is able to demonstrate that gambling is “good” for society, and that any negative effects are offset by the benefits.

The Alberta bishops have been consistent in pointing out the contrary. Gambling is not a neutral activity. While the end product of assisting worthwhile projects is positive, the means taken to achieve that end are not justified.

POLICY

Given that background, and consistent with the other dioceses in Alberta, the following is the policy of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan on the matter of accessing funds derived from gaming in the Province of Alberta:

- ❖ **No parish or other Catholic organization is to apply for funding from the provincial government through any program that receives its revenue from the Alberta Lottery Fund.**
- ❖ **No parish or other Catholic organization is to accept funds from parent organizations or other such community groups, where it is known that the fund was created in whole or in part from gambling activities such as casinos, VLT’s or high-stakes bingo.**

- ❖ **No parish or other Catholic organization is to volunteer to work at casinos or high-stakes bingo halls in order to raise funds for their projects, regardless of the benefit of the project to the Church or to other worthy beneficiaries.**

PLEASE NOTE: Not included in this policy are:

1. Lotteries, draws and bingos that are community-based and that benefit a local charity or charities (for example, a hospital foundation or public-service organization holding a dream-home lottery, or bingo as part of a parish fall supper).
2. Any attempt to address those who choose to take part in gambling activity as a participant. The intention of this policy is to address those Catholic parishes, groups, schools or other organizations who might seek to promote a good end but by making use of such questionable means.
3. While this policy is not directed at the participant in gambling activity, the leadership of this archdiocese cautions everyone concerning the risks involved in such activity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church §2413 does not condemn gambling as such, but provides some guidance as to its proper limits under justice. A good rule of thumb: essential needs should never be sacrificed to gambling activity, but only as much as might be considered discretionary (as much as one might spend on a night at the movie theatre).