

Overview of Gaming Strategy Initiatives

In April 2005, the Province released a 5-year plan to build a more sustainable and socially responsible gambling environment in Nova Scotia. The strategy called *A Better Balance: Nova Scotia's First Gaming Strategy*, charts a course for increased investment and key initiatives in problem gambling treatment and prevention.

Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation Gaming Strategy Initiatives

1. Reduce VLT hours (Complete)

- VLT machines are shut off at midnight, eliminating the midnight to close timeframe.
 - This change was implemented on schedule on July 1, 2005.
 - A December 2005 progress report showed the reduction resulted in positive outcomes.

2. Remove 1,000 VLTs (On track)

- VLTs are removed from profit retail locations to reduce availability and accessibility. Total reduction will reduce the number of VLTs by approximately 30%, taking it from 3,234 to 2,234.
 - Removal of 800 machines occurred on November 1, 2005. An additional 200 machines will be removed through attrition (105 of which were removed by July 7, 2006).

3. Remove "Stop Button" (Complete)

- On January 1, 2006, the "stop button" feature begins to be disabled on VLTs, to promote responsible gambling by removing the fallacy that players can use this feature to control the outcome of the game.
 - Completed on March 31, 2006.

4. Reduce the speed of VLT games (Complete)

- On January 1, 2006 VLT game speed begins to be reduced by 30%.
 - Completed on March 31, 2006.

5. Pilot card-based responsible gambling tools on VLTs (Complete)

- A year long research project including 10 VLT retail sites was conducted.
 - Stage III of the research project was completed in March 2006 in Windsor and Mount Uniacke.
 - Report from Omnifacts Research expected with recommendations by end of August 2006.

5. Open Responsible Gambling Resource Centres at Sydney and Halifax Casinos (On track)

- Although this initiative was not required to be complete until September 2006, the Halifax site was fast-tracked and opened in October 2005 and the resource centre in Sydney also opened ahead of schedule in June 2006.

7. Pilot card-based responsible gambling tools at the Casinos (On track)

- Test card-based player management tools at the casinos by March 31, 2007.
 - Implementation slated for March 31, 2008.

8. Gaming Strategy for Charitable Gaming Sector (Complete)

- Develop a gaming strategy for the charitable sector and introduce Linked Bingo.
 - 16 linked bingo sites were operational by January 31, 2006.

9. Responsible Gambling Programs (Complete)

- Continue to implement and enhance responsible gambling tools and programs.
 - Responsible Gambling Awareness Week (RGAW) took place during October 2-8, 2005;
 - Know the Score* interactive education program visited 14 post-secondary institutions by March 31, 2006;
 - High school drama, *Caught in the Game*, to complete 15 performances by May 30, 2006;
 - First Nations Information Programs developed as part of RGAW 2005;
 - Social marketing campaign, *Friends4Friends* was launched targeting 19-29 year-olds in January 2006.

Other provincial government departments responsible for the implementation of Gaming Strategy initiatives

Department of Health Promotion and Protection:

- Increase problem gambling resources.
- Develop an early identification/intervention program.
- Develop a comprehensive treatment demonstration research project.
- Establish a comprehensive problem gambling strategy.
- Launch public awareness program.
- Develop targeted education programs.
- Develop a community-based prevention program.

Office of Aboriginal Affairs

- Continue discussions with First Nations to restructure gaming arrangements.
- Work with First Nations to develop and implement strategies to address problem gambling.

Environment & Labour

- Commission a socio-economic study.
- Review current law enforcement resources to identify need.