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The Challenges of Sports Betting

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Background

- ▶ After US Supreme Court legalized sports betting in 2018, tremendous pressure upon Canada to do the same
- ▶ Bill C-218 legalized sports betting in 2021, leaving provinces and territories to regulate it
- ▶ C-218 launched a rapidly growing new industry—Ontario registered 40+ companies--with new jobs and new tax revenues
- ▶ Saturation advertising: 20% of tv sports programming is ads for sports betting (CBC)

No guardrails

- ▶ No consideration was given to the harms created, despite the overwhelming evidence of such harms in other countries and the steps taken by those countries to prevent and minimize the harm.
- ▶ When Canada legalized cannabis, it banned the ads to reduce the harms. It forgot to do so for sports betting
- ▶ Nothing done about match fixing either; still no prohibitions in Criminal Code.

1. Harmful to health

- ▶ Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) estimates 9.9% of Canadians (25.5% youth) or 4M Canadians present high risk of problem gambling, a six-fold increase since legalization
- ▶ Critics call online gambling 'engineered addiction'
- ▶ Gambling ads entice adolescents and other vulnerable persons. 10% of sports television audience is children and youth under 18. Ads groom them into a lifetime of gambling.
- ▶ Research shows that advertising restrictions reduce gambling-related harms.
- ▶ Other countries restrict ads for gambling.

2. Undermines essential values

- ▶ Instead of physical skill and exertion, teamwork, resilience, community representation and interaction, and the beauty of a well executed play—**values and outcomes essential to public investment in sports**--betting reduces meaning to whether an individual athlete or referee achieves a micro result or within-game parley. Often the outcome is not subject to bets—90% of bets today are ‘proposition’ bets, micro bets within the game.

3. Removes the physical

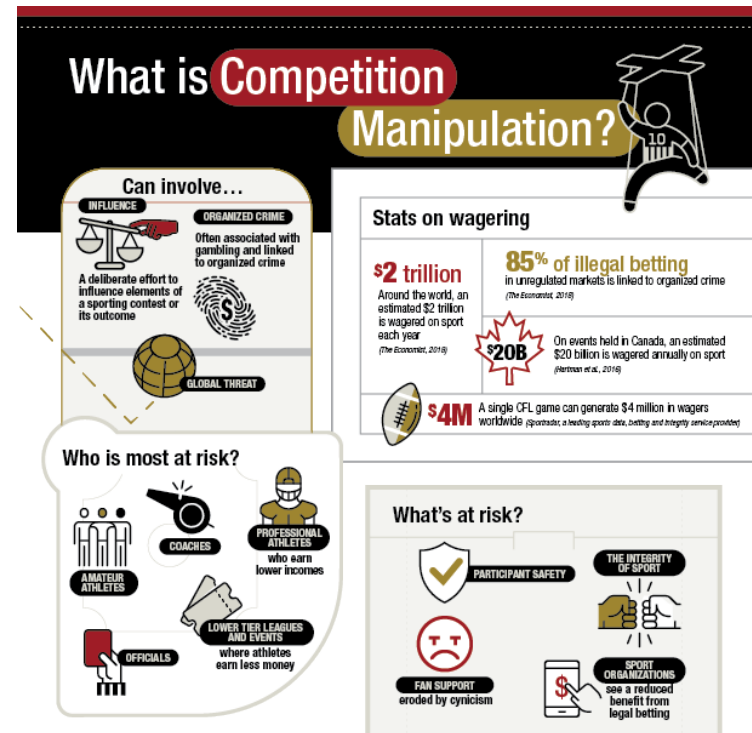
- ▶ Defenders of sports betting say that it increases interest in sports, but
- ▶ **No evidence that it increases the active, healthy participation encouraged by the Canadian Sport Policy; latest ParticipAction grade = D+**

4. A safe sport issue.

- ▶ Athletes in sports where betting is allowed are increasingly subjected to abuse and threats from disappointed gamblers.
- ▶ Athletes who act selflessly to enhance a team's performance (e.g. by passing to a teammate instead of shooting themselves) have been viciously criticized for not realizing a bettor's quota

5. Encourages cheating

- ▶ Gambling intensifies pressure upon athletes, coaches, managers, officials and journalists to fix matches, and manipulate other players, referees' decisions, and scores



6. Socially costly

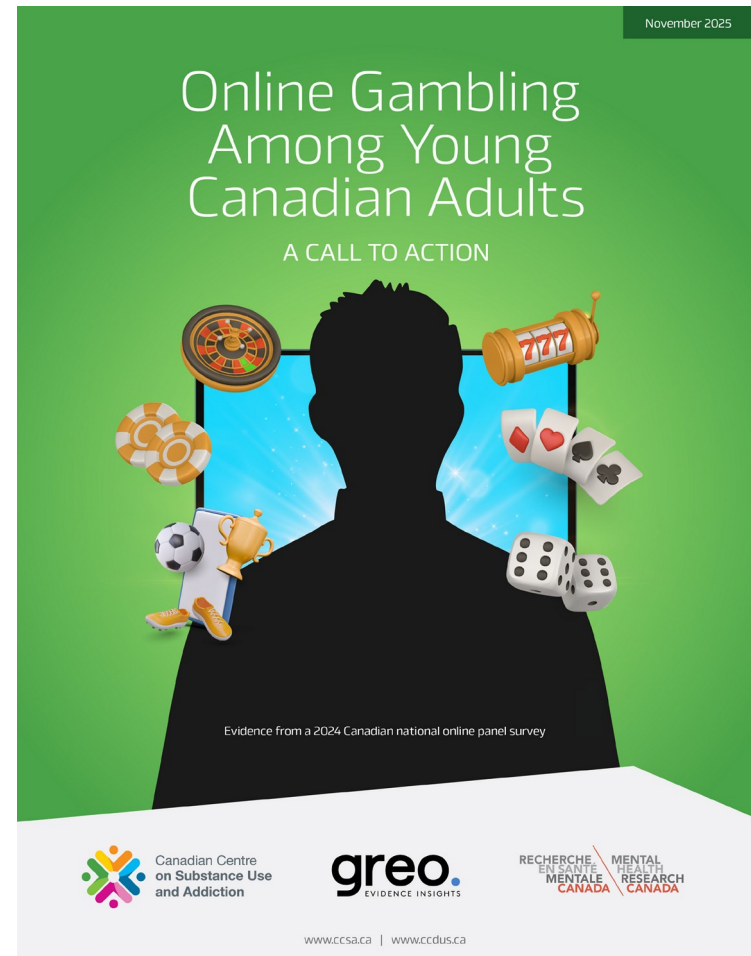
- ▶ Betting contributes to
 - ▢ reduced savings and investment
 - ▢ higher unemployment
 - ▢ increased crime
 - ▢ more spending on mental health and other social services
- ▶ Professor Earl Grinols of Baylor University (US) estimates that every dollar of benefit a casino brings to a community entails \$3 in increased social costs (*Gambling in America: Costs and Benefits*)

We do not oppose the legalization of sports betting

- ▶ That horse has left the barn
- ▶ But it should be strictly regulated, and only where
 - professional athletes and referees collectively agree and accept appropriate safeguards, and
 - gambling companies and sports leagues pay the full social and economic costs of gambling harms, especially the crisis in mental health.

CCSA recommends national strategy

- ▶ ***‘Unlike alcohol, tobacco and cannabis, there has never been a national discussion or strategy developed to manage the population health risks associated with gambling.’***



Public policy imperatives

- ▶ 1. Canada enact S-211, *An act respecting a national framework on sports betting advertising*
- ▶ 2. Canada sign and implement *Macolin Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competition* (JL)
- ▶ 3. FPT collaboration on
 - Prohibiting bets on the Olympic, Paralympic, amateur, school, college and university sports
 - Public education about the harms of sports betting
 - Better treatment to those addicted

Questions and comments