

**Funding policies mute public debate on social costs of gambling: critics**—February 26, 2003. By Sue Bailey and Louise Elliott. CNEWS Canada. OTTAWA (CP) -- Addiction counsellors are bound by "gambling-neutrality" policies that limit public exposure of devastating social costs, say observers and therapists. Some government-funded treatment workers also say they're strongly discouraged from urging problem bettors to quit. Instead, counsellors in Quebec and Ontario say governments expect them to teach people to wager within limits - an approach some critics say is ultimately fruitless. Gambling neutrality is widely imposed by governments to restrict bad press coverage, says Sol Boxenbaum, a Montreal gambling critic who heads the counselling firm Viva Consulting. A highly placed addictions specialist in Ontario said government officials exert subtle pressure on agencies not to speak out. "They have the potential of dramatically reducing an agency's funds," the source said on condition of anonymity. "And there would never be an overt threat." When first interviewed, Paul Kilbertus, a spokesman for the Ontario Ministry of Health, said agencies must focus on treatment - not the pros and cons of government gambling policy - as a condition of funding. Kilbertus later changed tack. He said the ministry has never cut off an agency's funds or threatened to do so. Still, he conceded negative public comments have been followed up in the past with a phone call to remind agencies of the "gambling neutral" stance to which they agreed. Nancy Langille, spokeswoman for Gambling Watch Network, an Ontario concerned citizens group, said such policies lead to a public information vacuum. [More...](#)

**VLT fraud numbers climbing**—February 26, 2003. By Kevin O'Connor. Leader-Post (Regina). It's becoming a familiar scene in Saskatchewan courtrooms—someone with an addiction to Video Lottery Terminal gambling admits to defrauding an employer to finance his or her habit. The most recent case was on Tuesday, when a former Regina woman with an addiction to VLTs pleaded guilty to defrauding her company of more than \$12,000. Provincial Court Judge Diane Morris gave Kendra Parenteau, 42, a one-year conditional sentence and ordered her to perform 150 hours of community service. Morris also required Parenteau to start paying back the \$12,183.35 she took

from Alliance Pipeline Ltd. The root of her problem was addiction to VLT gambling. "It's the Crown's contention, and there's ample evidence in support, that this was a disease of the mind," Sabat said. Defence lawyer Bill Klebeck said Parenteau, who is now living in North Dakota, has co-operated with the authorities, is remorseful and has taken gambling addiction counselling. "It's fair to say that VLTs are a significant part of their problem," said Bill Ursel, director of the Canadian Mental Health Association's problem gambling program. [More...](#)

**Gambling: Lawsuits argue social costs**—February 23, 2003. By Sue Bailey. Canadian Press. OTTAWA - Quebec City lawyer Jean Brochu says he was robbed blind for years by bandits. Today, the married father of two grown sons is leading a class-action lawsuit to start this fall that will be tracked by the global gambling industry. Certified last May, the lawsuit alleges that Loto-Quebec should compensate some 119,000 VLT addicts for counselling and legal fees. Gambling debts would not be covered in claimed damages of about \$700 million. More than 500 plaintiffs have formally joined the lawsuit so far, said Brochu's lawyer, Roger Garneau. The case, and at least one other in Canada, will soon force provincial governments to defend in court the social costs of lucrative gambling policies. [More...](#)

**Suicides linked to gambling**—February 23, 2003. By Sue Bailey. Canadian Press. OTTAWA - Two provinces have uncovered startling statistics linking gambling to suicides, raising new questions about the social costs of legalized betting in Canada. The Canadian Press has learned that Alberta recorded gambling in the files of 10 per cent of suicide victims in 2001, while Nova Scotia investigators found it was a factor in 6.3 per cent of suicides in the last two years. The numbers collected by medical examiners are much higher than previously recorded rates. They're likely the result of more intensive investigations of suicides in those provinces, yielding more information, experts say. Now the research is raising concerns about how data is collected across Canada and what the figures mean. Dr. James Young, Ontario's chief coroner, said he'll take the issue to a national gathering of provincial coroners in June. [More...](#)