

PRESS RELEASE

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BINGO FOR CASH NOT CHILD'S PLAY: NOVA SCOTIA GAMING FOUNDATION

When it comes to risky activity for children, gambling is gambling – and bingo is no different.

Though dabbling numbers at the local bingo hall may seem like a benign activity that can be fun for families or a way to amuse kids, research has shown that early exposure to gambling – *in any form* – increases the likelihood that children and youth will develop substantial gambling problems later in life.

“Normalization is the issue here,” says Celeste Gotell, Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation. “Gambling has become such an accepted part of contemporary culture that, when a question such as whether children should play bingo is raised, the public often responds with a general lack of concern. This reveals a critical issue: gambling in its various forms has become such a normalized activity that as a society we rarely question its potential risks and effects. And when we stop asking questions, we have a problem.”

In a world concerned with underage drinking, drug abuse, and youth violence, gambling often falls below the radar. But the numbers don't lie: according to the Department of Health Promotion and Protection's (HPP) *2007 Adult Gambling Prevalence Study*, young adults 19 to 24 in Nova Scotia are at the *highest risk* of developing gambling problems. And the normalization of gambling and early participation and exposure to gambling behavior—like bingo—contribute to this risk. According to HPP's *2008 Nova Scotia Adolescent Gambling Exploratory Research*, a key factor associated with gambling harm and risk in youth ages 13 to 18 includes having parents or others facilitate or encourage youth to gamble (e.g., provide funds, access, or information about how to gamble).

“Though certainly considered a lower-risk activity than video lottery terminal gambling or casino gambling, bingo is still a form of gambling, and the potential harm from this activity must be recognized. According to the government's own research*, 14 % of Nova Scotia youth ages 13 to 18 admitted playing bingo with their own money in bingo halls in 2008, and 13% gambled in bingo halls with adults. That's a substantial percentage (or number – just not amount) of Nova Scotia youth at potential risk,” says Jim MacCormack, Chair of the Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation's Board of Directors.

The Province of Nova Scotia acknowledges the risks of underage gambling: youth under 19 years of age are not permitted to purchase lottery tickets, to play VLTs, or to gamble in casinos; however, the regulations related to Bingo in the Gaming Control Act allow youth to have legal access to bingo establishments.

Bingo can be a fun way for adults to have a night out or to support a local charity, but when youth engage in gambling behavior, no one wins.

The **Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation** is a not-for-profit, arms-length government organization that encourages and supports an independent response to problem gambling in Nova Scotia.

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*from Health Promotion and Protection's *2008 Nova Scotia Adolescent Gambling Exploratory Research*