



Background

Casinos and Perceptions of Crime

December 2017

Gambling in British Columbia is highly regulated and the Province of British Columbia and BCLC have layers of security and oversight in place to keep casinos safe and enjoyable.

Criminal activity, in any form, is not tolerated, nor is it acceptable that anyone target BCLC gambling facilities for criminal purposes. Player safety is a top priority for both our organization and the service providers who operate our casinos and community gaming centres across B.C.

Research conducted within B.C. and in other jurisdictions indicates that the introduction of a casino into a community does not result in a long-term increase in crime.

Security Measures at Casinos

Casinos in B.C. have more security and surveillance than most banks or venues of a comparable size that attract large volumes of people.

As noted by Anti-Money Laundering Specialist and lawyer Christine Duhaime, in a 2016 report commissioned by the Gaming Security Professionals of Canada, Canadian casinos have strong safeguards in place to deter and prevent potential money laundering activities:

“Virtually every transaction at a casino in Canada is video recorded, making casinos one of the highest risk locations to potential money launderers. Canada’s strict enforcement of anti-money laundering law...the presence of security and surveillance personnel at casinos, and the inability of criminals to complete large financial transactions anonymously with cash, chips or by converting currency or electronic funds transfers, makes Canadian casinos unattractive to would-be money launderers.”¹

B.C. casinos feature surveillance cameras that cover all publicly accessible areas and 24 hour surveillance staff who operate under strict standards set out by BCLC, and employ over 100 security staff with up to 30 staff working at any given time. In addition to extensive on-site security staff, BCLC has 15 investigators and 13 compliance officers dedicated to the oversight of the security and integrity of all gaming facilities across the province, as well as for lottery and internet gaming.

BCLC also has a dedicated Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Unit consisting of five members who specialize in AML Investigations, Programs and Intelligence. The AML Unit works with police and regulatory agencies, and shares information regarding individuals it believes may be engaged in criminal activity as it pertains to suspected terrorist activity, money laundering and proceeds of crime related offences.

¹ 2016 [Casinos & Money Laundering Q & A](#), October 2016, pg 12



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As a result, BCLC has proactively banned over 270 individuals from entering a BC gaming facility because they are either deemed to be a public safety risk, are involved with criminal activity involving proceeds of crime related offences, or are suspected members of organized crime groups. Additionally, BCLC bars people from all gaming facilities in B.C. if they are involved in serious incidents such as cheating or assault.

Research into Community Impact

The Province's Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch commissioned the 2007 [Socio Economic Impacts of New Gaming Venues in Four Lower Mainland Communities](#) study, to investigate the overall socioeconomic costs, benefits, and impacts of casino gambling in order to develop responsible gaming policies for the people of British Columbia.

The study, conducted between 2004 and 2006, assessed the impacts of gaming in the City and Township of Langley, Surrey and Vancouver before, during and after a gambling facility was opened: In each of the communities, the study found no significant increase in the overall rates of crime with the opening of a new gambling facility. The study further showed that both Langley Township and Surrey experienced a statistically significant drop in the number of criminal code offenses after the introduction of gaming facilities near or in their communities. No change was observed for the City of Langley or Vancouver.²

Another study, from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, commissioned by the Canadian Gaming Association in 2012 in light of a proposed casino in the Greater Toronto Area concluded: *"With respect to the crime rate, however, casinos are typically found to have no significant effects, as the increase in volume is generally explained by the number of temporary visitors in the area – meaning that there should be no increased risk of crime-related harm to nearby residents."*³

Most recently, the Canadian Gaming Association released the 2015 [Casino Gaming in Canada: The Opinions of Community Leaders](#) study, focusing on the perceptions and experiences of community leaders who had casinos developed in their municipalities. Of note: *"Prior to the introduction of casino gaming, public perception of various societal and personal difficulties associated with casino gaming included increased crime, poverty and bankruptcy, traffic, cannibalization of revenue from other entertainment businesses and problem gambling/gambling addiction disorders."*

*"Community Leaders indicated that the majority of these initial concerns did not materialize (specifically crime and related strains on municipal services). As an indication of the limited impact, when questioned about incremental demand on public services such as police, fire and EMS as a result of introducing casino gaming, Community Leaders suggested no such demands were created."*⁴

² 2007 [Socio Economic Impacts of New Gaming Venues in Four Lower Mainland Communities](#), July 2007, pg 7-8

³ 2012 [Informing the Public Debate: Academic Research on Crime and Casinos](#), December 2012, pg 8

⁴ 2015 [Casino Gaming in Canada: The Opinions of Community Leaders](#), January 2016, pg 7