



27 March 2009

Dear Pastors, Lay Pastoral Animators and Parishioners of the Archdiocese,

The issue of gambling in Alberta has been addressed on more than one occasion by the bishops of the province, either individually or as a collective. Having studied their texts, which are very comprehensive and focused, I feel there is no need for me to repeat what they have said on the topic. Any of you who wish may find these documents on the Internet at the following sites:

[http://www.edmontoncatholic-church.com/pastoral\\_letters/gambling.shtml](http://www.edmontoncatholic-church.com/pastoral_letters/gambling.shtml)

[http://www.dioceseofstpaul.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=11](http://www.dioceseofstpaul.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=11)

[http://www.dioceseofstpaul.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=54&Itemid=11](http://www.dioceseofstpaul.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=54&Itemid=11)

<http://www.zenit.org/article-16524?l=english>

Since becoming the bishop in our archdiocese, I have not until now had to deal with this issue directly, and so I have been content to uphold in a general way what has been laid out in these other statements. Very recently, however, a few different parishes in the archdiocese have attempted to apply for funding for projects from the Wild Rose Foundation. (I might add that there is also an archdiocesan project, not through Wild Rose, which is now equally affected by this.) These applications require my endorsement, and it is in this context that I have had to research the matter more closely. This is the fruit of my research:

- Casino gambling, VLTs and high-stakes bingo are the cause of untold hardship for a minority of patrons who find themselves addicted to this form of “entertainment”, leading to the loss of jobs, house and home, and in dire circumstances, life itself.
- The government of Alberta funnels a portion of the earnings from gambling into the provincial treasury, where it is undistinguished from all other revenues, and from whence it is distributed to all ministries of the government. Total revenues in 2008 were \$39.582B, of which \$2.220B was garnered from gambling, or 5.6%.
- Among the programs that declare their reliance on the Alberta Lottery Fund is the Wild Rose Foundation. This foundation invites charities and non-profit societies to apply for funds which can be used for laudable purposes. As a result, the government is able to demonstrate that gambling is “good” for society, and that any negative effects are offset by the benefits.

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The Alberta bishops have been consistent in pointing out the contrary. Gambling is not a neutral activity. While the end product of assisting worthwhile projects is positive, the means taken to achieve that end are not justified. Given that background, I feel the time has come for me to outline a policy for this Archdiocese on the matter of accessing funds derived from gaming in the Province of Alberta:

- ❖ **No parish or other Catholic organization is to apply for funding from the provincial government through any program that receives any of its revenue from the Alberta Lottery Fund. This includes but is not limited to the Wild Rose Foundation.**
- ❖ **No parish or other Catholic organization is to volunteer to work at casinos in order to raise funds for their projects, regardless of the benefit of the project to the Church or to other worthy beneficiaries.**

While this directive is effective immediately, it bears no judgment on past projects that received provincial funding in good faith. Obviously, we must work to find other ways to raise funds for our projects, acknowledging that this will demand more time, energy and ingenuity.

As I write this, I am aware of the immediate impact on some parishes that were hoping to access money from these sources for some very fine projects. It is with this awareness that I make this statement with a heavy heart. I wish I had an easy solution to the dilemma that this position poses, but I do not. Rather, I call on us, one and all as an archdiocesan family, to be resourceful in finding ways to accomplish the good that we intend at all times.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



+ Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.  
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan