

October 2010

## **UPFRONT: SENIORS AND GAMBLING: A HIDDEN PROBLEM?**



Sandra Murphy

The jury is still out on whether gambling among Nova Scotia seniors is a harmful activity. Does it encourage many older people

to spend money that should otherwise have been spent on housing, food and medication; or does it get seniors out of the house and socializing with their peers at a fairly minimal cost?

The work that Community Links undertook over the last year, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation, didn't provide definitive answers. What it did do was underscore that there is a huge amount of interest in this topic. Every time we explained what we were doing, people wanted to talk. We heard anecdotal stories of seniors at casinos wearing diapers in order to stay at the slots or VLT's. We heard of wonderful anniversary cruises, funded by generous children, on floating casinos. We heard of the neighbour's uncle who had lost his home due to gambling losses and was now living in a shack in someone's back pasture. We heard of friends meeting regularly at the local bingo, spending only their agreed limit, and all in aid of some worthwhile community project. We heard from people who saw seniors in a checkout line spending huge amounts on lotto and scratch tickets.

Surveys of senior leaders and staff of various organizations who work with seniors had concerns about some of their members or their clients who gamble. Focus groups with seniors who gamble, and who for the most part enjoy it, showed that even they were not altogether comfortable with certain kinds of gambling and the negative impact it was having on others. Many clearly don't see bingo in the same light as other forms of gambling, and in fact don't identify it as gambling at all. This was highlighted when we asked seniors at the 50+ Expo to answer some questions on gambling. Many stated they never gambled but it soon became clear that they played bingo fairly regularly.

Many people in our focus groups talked about the dependency of community organizations, like seniors groups, on the revenue from gambling to provide service and to survive. They also talked about the government and its own dependency on gaming revenues. This feeling was best summed up in the quote that "The government has one foot on the gas and one foot on the brake."

Yes, the jury is still out on seniors' gambling, but it is clear that more dialogue is needed. Community Links will be continuing the conversation by developing some fun presentations which we will make available across the province in the New Year. We hope these presentations will

provide information and a comfortable venue for more discussion of this issue and point the way to future areas for research or policy change.

Community Links' report *Seniors and Gambling: A Hidden Problem?* is available on our website [www.nscommunitylinks.ca](http://www.nscommunitylinks.ca) or by contacting our provincial office.

### The Province, Seniors and On-Line Gambling

News that the Nova Scotia Government is considering involvement in on-line gambling has caused concern among Community Links Board members. In a recent letter to Finance Minister Graham Steele, the Board says that although many seniors in Nova Scotia enjoy various forms of gambling as a social activity, on-line gambling has no social element and "therefore has no redeeming quality for seniors." Community Links will be following this issue as it unfolds.

### A New Name and Brand

The Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation will officially re-launch as the '**Gambling Awareness Foundation of Nova Scotia**' in late Fall 2010. This is partly to distinguish the Foundation from the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation, and to fit more closely with its vision of "individuals, families, and communities free from gambling harm." A new logo and promotions will also be developed. You can find out more about the Foundation's work by visiting [www.nsgamingfoundation.org/](http://www.nsgamingfoundation.org/)

## Gambling in Nova Scotia- Test Your Knowledge

Answers on page 7

1. Which form of gambling produces the most revenue for the province?
  - a) Casinos
  - b) Atlantic Lottery Corporation Lotteries
  - c) Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs)
  
2. What percentage of Nova Scotians scored as problem gamblers in 2007?
  - a) 8.2%
  - b) 2.5%
  - c) 11.5
  
3. Which form of gambling is most addictive, (i.e. produces the highest percentage of problem gamblers)?
  - a) casino games
  - b) VLTs
  - c) scratch tickets
  
4. What part of the province has the highest rates for most forms of gambling?
  - a) South Shore
  - b) Halifax Dartmouth Area
  - c) Cape Breton
  
5. Women make up what percentage of problem gamblers?
  - a) 22.4%
  - b) 33.6%
  - c) 51%
  
6. What percentage of Nova Scotians report that they gamble at least once a year?
  - a) 87%
  - b) 66%
  - c) 38%

*Quiz based on information from the 2007 Adult Gambling Precedence Study, Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection*

# What's So Bad/Good About **BINGO** ?

As mentioned in our Up Front article, many seniors we talked to do not see Bingo as gambling. In fact it *is* a game of chance, and has been widely popular in North America since 1934. It is said that the name Bingo was given to the game by an American toy salesman named Edwin S. Lowe. Originally a fairground game, the story goes that a Catholic priest from Pennsylvania approached Lowe about using bingo as a means of raising church funds. When Bingo started being played in churches it became increasingly popular—and remains so in Nova Scotia today.

And that's where the dilemma of Bingo begins. This popular game of chance has raised millions of dollars for worthy community causes in Nova Scotia, but at the same time, there are concerns about what effect it has on the finances and well being of people who play frequently. This concern is shared by Community Links Board member and volunteer "Bingo caller" Sheila Hoeg.

As a Coordinator of VON Community Programs and long-time member of the Kinette Club of New Glasgow, Sheila can see both sides of the Bingo debate. Sheila's late husband Charlie was instrumental in developing hall Bingo and TV Bingo as a major source of fundraising for the Kinsmen Club, and it was he who got the Kinettes involved in running their own weekly Bingo.

Sheila has mixed feelings about some aspects of the game. "I know that some people are spending money that should be going on basics like food and shelter," says Sheila "Many of the people who play are seniors, and many spend \$70 or more a night on the cards, 50/50 draws, etc."

On the other hand, Sheila knows first hand how funds raised by Bingo are used to "give back to the community." Sheila's program at the VON is one of the beneficiaries of the Kinsmen and Kinettes Bingo. "The positives outweigh the negatives," says Sheila. For many seniors, this is their only form of entertainment. There are many single senior women who come to Bingo as a social outlet. They arrive early, exchange knitting, bring their home made fudge, and generally have a social time. Sheila sees that getting out to Bingo can help seniors cope with loneliness and isolation, and is a "lot better than sitting in front of the TV every evening"

## **Other Community Links members agree. Here are a few opinions from members:**

Bill Sampson of Cape Breton sees Bingo as "a mild form of gambling." Unlike the Casino, Bingo will not cause someone to lose their life savings in one night.

Fran Checkley of Dartmouth sees Bingo as more entertainment than gambling. However, she cautions that with gambling in general, "people don't look at what they spent, they look at what they won."

Elizabeth Zunic of Walton enjoys the occasional game of Bingo, and sees it mostly as entertainment.

Darlene Cameron of North Sydney agrees, but she finds Bingo boring, and does not play.



Bingo used to be called beano, since beans were used as markers. The name changed when someone yelled "Bingo" by mistake!



# Preventing Falls Together

for age friendly communities

## Coalition News and Notes

Coalitions in Western and Central Nova Scotia have been very pleased with the response to the *Mobility-Now You're Going Places* workshops held over the spring and summer, and now this fall. Seniors have come together for a series of workshops to learn about the benefits of mobility aids, how to use them properly, and how to obtain one.

### Upcoming workshops are planned for:

CBRM: October 13, 20, and 27 at Club 55. A light lunch will be provided. Registration is required. To register please call Wayne MacKay, Physical Activity Coordinator Cape Breton Region, Health Promotion and Protection 563-3751 or email Susan King at [coordinator@preventingfallstogether.ca](mailto:coordinator@preventingfallstogether.ca)

Cumberland Coalition is hosting mobility workshops Wednesday, Oct 20 and Wednesday, Oct 27, 2010. Lions Hall, Oxford, NS – beginning at 10 am and wrapped up with a free lunch. For more info, contact Brenda Mackinnon [nscentral@preventingfallstogether.ca](mailto:nscentral@preventingfallstogether.ca)

Annapolis Valley Health Seniors LINC program and Preventing Falls Together will host a series of mobility workshops Oct 15th, 22nd & 29th. 10 AM-12 noon .

Kentville Baptist Church, 503 Main Street, Kentville. Free Lunch. To register or for more information contact the Town of Kentville at 690-6191 or 690-6124 or Email: [nswest@preventingfallstogether.ca](mailto:nswest@preventingfallstogether.ca) Or call Carla Malay at 902-682-2090

All mobility workshops are funded by the New Horizons for Seniors Program

## Commemorating a Falls Prevention Champion



The Cumberland County Seniors Council and the

Cumberland County Preventing Falls Together coalition members have placed a bench in Dickey Park in the Town of Amherst in memory of the late Leslie Day, for his community service in Cumberland County. He was a strong advocate for falls prevention as well. It is hoped that seniors and all community members can spend a reflective moment on this bench as they use the park for their daily activity. Thanks to Rodney Long, Town of Amherst, and the Cumberland County Seniors who worked to support this initiative to its conclusion.

**Falls Prevention Tip:** (thanks to Krista Buchanan, OT) Install properly mounted grab bars in the tub area (Shower curtain rods, soap dishes, faucets and towel racks are NOT designed to take your weight. MANY falls have occurred this way.)

## A Tale of Two Falls

The Preventing Falls Together (PFT) Program tries to emphasize that most falls among seniors are predictable and preventable. Many of the fact sheets in our PFT Tool Kit suggest various ways to make our homes, communities and personal behaviors safer from falls.

Therefore, it is always disappointing to hear seniors talk about their falls –but we do! Each year at the 50+ Expo, for example, seniors visit the PFT booth and talk about a fall that they or a loved one experienced. We hope that the materials and education that we provide at presentations and displays across the province will help prevent further falls, even though this is difficult to measure.

It's especially disappointing to hear of falls among our own friends and family. This summer, my mother, who is 89, fell twice. Both falls were a result of classic preventable situations that our literature talks about. In the first case, Mom bent down to pick up the mail on the floor of her porch. She did this on the way to answering the door, so was in a hurry, not wanting to leave the visitor standing on the porch too long. Mom returned to a standing position too quickly, felt dizzy, and fell over backwards. Fortunately, the visitor was able to help her up and no serious damage was done.

A few weeks later, Mom was called over to look at a new chair that had just been brought in her front door. Her attention was on the door, not the floor, where someone had just been using a vacuum cleaner. Mom tripped and fell over the vacuum, and again, was fortunate that someone was available to help her up.

Again-no serious damage was done-thanks to some very strong bones, I suspect!

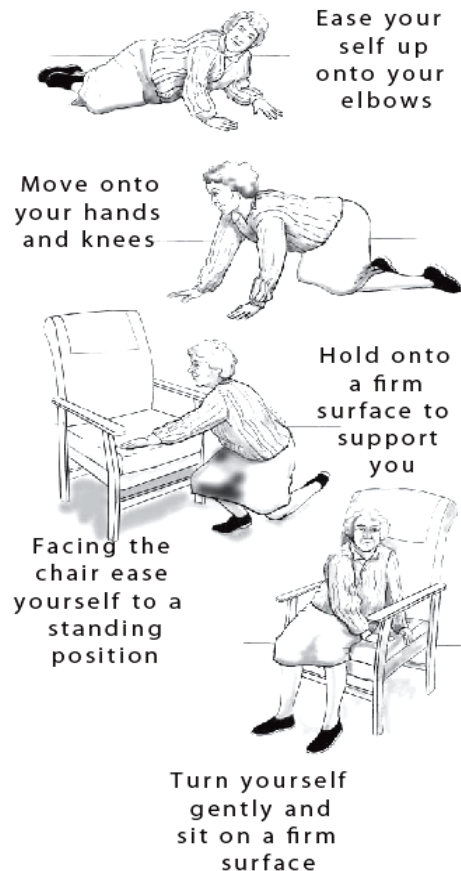
The moral to this story?

- Don't hurry
- Return slowing to a standing position after bending, lying or sitting
- Never leave anything unattended in the middle of the floor

Hindsight is 20/20! *Anne Corbin*

### Tips on how to get up from a fall:

If you are alone when you fall, and feel you can attempt to get up, here are a few tips, courtesy of Berkshire Health Promotion, Berkshire, UK.



## Do Not Gamble with Your Health-Be Informed!

As Nova Scotians approach the age of 65, one of the decisions they may need to make is whether to rely solely on Nova Scotia Seniors Pharmacare to take care of their medical needs, or to maintain some form of private health insurance. Can you add protection to give yourself freedom and choices that will lower your stress level in your time of need?

While Pharmacare provides coverage for most prescriptions, there are other issues to be considered. For example if you do not have home nursing coverage as part of your health insurance and do not have the financial means to cover care related costs, the province may put you in a nursing home outside of your immediate community, away from family and friends. Private insurance coverage could mean all the difference in giving you choices and freedom in staying in your home longer until a bed becomes available in a nursing home of your choice.

I would suggest that you check with your health insurance provider to see what coverage you have, and then talk to an expert you can trust to see what options are available to you. You have proper insurance on your home and on your vehicle, why not on your health?

*Submitted by Roy Loundsbury, Insurance Broker*

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Answers to quiz page 2:

1. (c)      4. (c)
2. (b)      5. (b)
3. (b)      6. (a)

*Problems with gambling? In financial trouble? For immediate help, call the Problem Gambling Help Line any time of the day or night:  
**1-888-347-8888***



## Some Gambling Trivia

- Until the omnibus bill of 1967, introduced by Pierre Trudeau, lotteries were illegal in Canada. (*Wikipedia*)
- Harvard University and the Great Wall of China were financed by lotteries. (*Wikipedia*)
- Gambling was virtually unknown in many areas of the world in pre-colonial times. Many indigenous cultures shared all resources, so the concept of winners and losers did not apply! (*NS Addiction Services*)
- Chances of a regular Bingo player becoming a problem gambler are 1 in 50, compared to 1 in 4 VLT users. (*NSHPP 2007 Adult Gambling Prevalence Study*)



# Notes and Notices

Community Transit-NS presents:

## **On the Road to a Provincial Transportation Strategy**

Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2010, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Centre,  
Truro, NS

To register or for info, go to  
[www.nscbta.ca](http://www.nscbta.ca)

## **Community Links**

### **Mini People's School!**

October 15, 2010 at the  
Steelworkers and Sydney Pensioners Club  
30 Inglis Street, Sydney.

All area seniors are welcome to attend free.

Contact 902-422-0914 or  
[admin@nscommunitylinks.ca](mailto:admin@nscommunitylinks.ca)

## **Look for our next People's School winter 2011 in HRM**

### **The 5th Annual Tools for Life Conference and Exhibits,**

Friday, October 22nd  
Horton High School. The conference is again  
open to the general public and admission is  
free.

For more information please visit  
[www.tools4life.ca](http://www.tools4life.ca)

### **A Study of Nova Scotia's Voluntary Sector Labour Force A Provincial Conference**

October 25, 2010  
Holiday Inn, Dartmouth, NS  
For conference registration details, go to  
[www.nfpresearch.ns.ca](http://www.nfpresearch.ns.ca)

Or contact Conference Coordinator at:  
[nfpresearch@phoenixyouth.ca](mailto:nfpresearch@phoenixyouth.ca)  
A joint initiative of FOCO (Federation of  
Community Organizations and PHOENIX  
(Helping Youth Rise Above)

## **Taking Action On Poverty**

Conference October 26-28

Holiday Inn Truro

Full subsidies are available for those living on  
a low income. This is your chance to make  
your voice heard!

Register on-line at  
[www.hpclearinghouse.ca](http://www.hpclearinghouse.ca)  
or contact (902) 494-6496  
[endingpovertyns@gmail.com](mailto:endingpovertyns@gmail.com)

## **Provincial Gathering of Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Organizations**

Leaders in the nonprofit voluntary sector! Join  
Imagine Canada, HPP- Volunteerism, and  
Community Links on November 4th and 5th,  
2010 to set the agenda for the sector –  
locally, provincially, and nationally – and on  
November 5th, take part in skills  
development.

Holiday Inn Harbourview, Dartmouth

November 4 and 5, 2010

Some subsidies available

For information, contact  
902-422-0914

[admin@nscommunitylinks.ca](mailto:admin@nscommunitylinks.ca)

Visit [www.nscommunitylinks.ca](http://www.nscommunitylinks.ca) to view the  
information/registration form and outline of  
workshops

## **Becoming Canada's Recreation Playground!**

Recreation Nova Scotia holds its 13 Annual  
Conference and Trade Show November 17-19,  
2010 at the Westin in Halifax

Visit [www.recreationns.ns.ca/conference](http://www.recreationns.ns.ca/conference) for  
more details or call (902) 425-1128; email:  
[info@recreationns.ns.ca](mailto:info@recreationns.ns.ca)

## Community Links Board of Directors

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