

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Health Policy Branch, Health Canada

**FROM:** Renze Nauta, Program Director, Work & Economics  
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**DATE:** June 1, 2026

**SUBJECT: The Effects of Sports Betting: Considerations for Health Canada's Men and Boys' Health Strategy**

### WHO WE ARE

Cardus is a non-partisan think tank dedicated to clarifying and strengthening, through research and dialogue, the ways in which society's institutions can work together for the common good.

Cardus's Work and Economics program has conducted extensive research on the gambling market in Canada, with a recent focus on sports betting. Our research reports are freely available at [cardus.ca](http://cardus.ca).

### ISSUE AND BACKGROUND

Health Canada is consulting to develop a Men and Boys' Health Strategy which will consider the impact of addiction.<sup>1</sup> Cardus believes that any strategy centered around combatting addiction for men and boys should account for the increasing rise of sports betting, particularly as it relates to the proliferation of sports betting advertising.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the significant impact that sports betting has on men's health, this strategy should give serious consideration to the restriction of sports betting advertising and to the strengthening of anti-gambling disclaimers and messaging. Sports betting advertising should be regulated similar to other legal products that can carry a risk of harm such as alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis.

### RATIONALE

#### (1) Gambling carries significant risk of harm to Canadians, especially for young men

The average player account in Ontario spends an average of \$283 per month on gambling, yet the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction states that players should not spend more than 1 percent of pre-tax household income on gambling.<sup>2</sup> In Ontario, 1 percent of the average household income is \$89, less than a third of the average account spend.<sup>3</sup> Players who spend an excess of 1 percent of their annual income on gambling are 4.3 times as likely to experience financial harm, 4.7 times as likely to experience relational harm, 3.9 times as likely to experience emotional or psychological harm, and 4.4 times as likely to experience harm from health problems related to gambling.<sup>4</sup> Unregulated sports betting in particular is a public health concern because sports events are generally conceived as communal family events in which children are often present. If

<sup>1</sup> "Improving the health of men and boys in Canada", Health Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/improving-health-men-canada.html>

<sup>2</sup> J. Lewis, "The Hidden Harms of Single-Event Sports Betting in Ontario", Cardus, September 5, 2024, <https://www.cardus.ca/research/work-economics/reports/the-hidden-harms-of-single-event-sports-betting-in-ontario/>.

<sup>3</sup> J. Lewis, "Hidden Harms".

<sup>4</sup> J. Lewis, "Hidden Harms".

sports betting advertising is not regulated, children will sit through significant amounts of advertising for gambling.

The rapid expansion of sports betting in Canada has occurred to the detriment of young men's financial and psychological health. In Ontario, gambling-related contacts to the mental health addictions helplines for men and boys aged 15 to 24 has increased by 337.8 percent compared with levels prior to the legalization of private online gambling.<sup>5</sup> Canadian males 15 or older were also three times as likely to bet on sports compared to females in 2018,<sup>6</sup> which is similar to findings by Leger in 2024.<sup>7</sup>

**(2) Given the risks, sports betting advertising needs to be significantly reduced and gambling prevention messaging should be strengthened.**

Canadians are inundated with sports betting advertising during broadcasts; one study found that sports broadcasts have 2.8 references to sports betting per minute.<sup>8</sup> In 2023, a survey found that 48 percent of Canadians thought that the number of sports betting ads were excessive, and 63 percent of Canadians agreed there should be limits on the number and placement of ads.<sup>9</sup>

Further study should be made on how to improve gambling-prevention messaging, especially for men and boys. For example, a disclaimer with a clear delineation of the risks like "spending more than 1 percent of your pre-tax household income on gambling quadruples your risk of harm" can be more effective than common disclaimers like "know your limit play within it".<sup>10</sup>

**CONTACT**

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and assist with future considerations on this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [rnauta@cardus.ca](mailto:rnauta@cardus.ca).

<sup>5</sup> R. Forrest et al., *Help-seeking for gambling problems following expansion of Ontario's online gambling market and legalization of single-event sports betting*, (Canadian Medical Association Journal, 2026) 285.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, *Study: Who gambles and who experiences gambling problems in Canada*, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220809/dq220809b-eng.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> P. Lauzon et al., "Market Updates on Sports Betting and Fantasy Sports in Canada and the U.S.", September 2025, <https://leger360.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/US-and-Canada-Sports-Betting-and-Fantasy-Sports-Fall-2025-Omni-Report.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> J.J. Wheaton et al., "Exploring the Prevalence of Gambling Marketing: An Analysis of the Prevalence of Marketing Across Televised and Social Media Coverage of NBA and NHL in Ontario," *University of Bristol*, January 2024, [https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/business-school/documents/Exploring\\_the\\_Prevalence\\_of\\_Gambling\\_Marketing\\_UoB\\_CBCNews.pdf](https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/business-school/documents/Exploring_the_Prevalence_of_Gambling_Marketing_UoB_CBCNews.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> S. Morasch, "How Much Is Too Much? Nearly Half of Canadians Think Gambling Ads Have Gotten Out of Hand," *Ipsos*, January 18, 2023, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/how-much-too-much-nearly-half-canadians-think-gambling-ads-have-gotten-out-hand>.

<sup>10</sup> J. Lewis, "Hidden Harms"