



The Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario

The Anglican Church of Canada

The Most Reverend Anne Germond
Metropolitan

October 2023

We, the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario, along with the Primate of Canada Archbishop Linda Nicholls, and the National Anglican Indigenous Archbishop Chris Harper stand united and speak with one voice in our opposition to advertisements for gambling on television, radio, and social media.

At its fall meeting, members of Provincial Council of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario passed a motion adding strength to our opposition to online advertisements for gambling. We are including the motion as part of our statement.

We are well aware that the purpose of advertising is to drive revenue and traffic toward these sites. Our mission as pastors is to defend the vulnerable and speak for those persons who may not have a voice, particularly youth in this case. Government policy has recognized that tobacco should not be advertised. This is true of other commodities. We urge you to recognize that well-being of people can be deeply affected by addiction to gambling which is now brought into the living rooms and on the laptops, smart phones and tablets through this business model. We may have reservations about gambling itself but are not condemning it as it remains a personal choice. Rather we are speaking to the policy that would permit the advertising and driving traffic and revenue toward an addictive behaviour in youth and vulnerable populations.

Background:

Bill C-218 (The Safe and Regulated Sports Betting Act) received royal assent in Canada in August 2021 enabling provincial and territorial governments the ability to establish regulatory regimes for sports betting.

The Ontario Government established iGaming on April 4th, 2022. In the first year of business iGaming Ontario reported more than 1.6 million active player accounts and \$35.6 billion in total wagers. This puts Ontario among the top five gaming jurisdictions in North America with each player spending an average of \$167 a month on this activity.

While sports organizations argue that betting drives fan engagement and should be encouraged as it enhances the enjoyment of the spectator experience, the advertisements for gambling have become pervasive during broadcast of professional sports. An Ipsos

survey published on January 18th, 2023, concluded that the 'sheer volume' of advertising could have a negative cumulative effect and that 48% of Canadians agree that it needs to be cut back. The same poll found that Canadians are experiencing fatigue from gambling advertising.

Statistics Canada recently reported that 1.6% of adult gamblers in Canada or 304,000 persons are at moderate to high risk of gambling disorders. In Ontario that would mean 25,600 persons experience these disorders.

Gambling in all its forms is known to have a deleterious effect on individuals who participate in this activity resulting in anxiety, depression, and even suicide. Once an individual has a gambling disorder, they become part of a recurring pattern of chasing losses and trying to regain lost money by continuing to gamble. Out of control gambling leads some individuals to commit illegal acts to finance their compulsive gambling addiction. Relationships within families are often lost, along with jobs and hope for the future. Gambling's harm extends beyond individuals, impacting families and communities. There is a growing body of anecdotal evidence from mental health professionals suggesting that gambling is becoming a crisis and an emergency within the population and not simply a public health 'challenge'.

As we seek the welfare of the cities and towns within our Province, we invite Anglicans in Ontario to add your voices to ours and stand with us now.

Join the Campaign to Ban Ads for Gambling which calls for the prohibition of ads for gambling in the same way that ads for cannabis and tobacco have been restricted.

We urge Anglicans to read the "White Paper on the Impact of Advertising for Gambling" (Appendix 1) prepared by The Campaign to Ban Ads on Gambling. Educate yourself and others about the impact of gambling ads on individuals and families and write to your MPP asking for the disestablishment of iGaming in Ontario.

Finally, pray for your local communities, commending them to God's care and keeping. Ask God to grant that they be kept free from all social ills. And pray that we may be given strength of purpose and concern for others that together we create communities of justice and peace.

We remain yours in the faith and hope of Christ,

Archbishop Linda Nicholls (Primate of Canada)
Archbishop Chris Harper (National Anglican Indigenous Archbishop)

Archbishop Anne Germond (Metropolitan of Ontario and Bishop of Algoma and Moosonee)
Bishop Susan Bell (Bishop of Niagara)
Bishop William Cliff (Bishop of Ontario)
Bishop Todd Townshend (Bishop of Huron)
Bishop Shane Parker (Bishop of Ottawa)
Bishop Andrew Asbil (Bishop of Toronto)
Bishop Kevin Robertson (Suffragan Bishop of Toronto)
Bishop Riscylla Shaw (Suffragan Bishop of Toronto)

Motion passed by the Provincial Council of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario on September 27th, 2023. Hamilton Ontario

Be it resolved that this Provincial Synod:

- i. acknowledge with dismay the many harms addressed in the White Paper on the Impact of Advertising which was prepared by the Campaign to Ban Ads for Gambling
- ii. commend this document for study in the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario and its Dioceses
- iii. urge all levels of our church structure to be active in advocacy concerning the harms of Advertising for Gambling
- iv. ask the Metropolitan to send a letter on our behalf to the Premier, Ministers and Members of Provincial Parliament expressing our concern, make available to congregations and their members draft points that they may also send letters and use other avenues such as the Government Secretariat in advocacy on this issue, and
- v. calls for the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Germond". The signature is written in a cursive style and includes a small cross symbol above the first letter of the first name.

Archbishop Anne Germond
Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario