

The Impact of Covid-19 on Gambling Availability in Canada

Prepared March 25, 2020 by Rhys Stevens, Alberta Gambling Research Institute

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“In a 72-hour period, almost all of the 114 casinos in Canada closed down, along with more than 200 permanent bingo halls and community gaming centres.” (Canadian Gaming Association email communication, March 24, 2020).¹

Canada’s Commercial Gambling Closures Due to COVID-19 by Province (as of March 25, 2020)

	Ticket Lottery	VLTs	Casinos	Online	Horse Racing
BC	Open	N/A	X	Open	X
AB	Open	X	X	N/A	X
SK	Open	X	X	N/A	X (a)
MB	Open	Open	X	Open	X
ON	Open (b)	N/A	X	Open	X
QC	X (c)	X	X	Open	X
NB	Open	X	X	Open	X (d)
PE	Open	X	X	Open	X
NS	Open	X	X	Open	X (e)
NL	Open	X	N/A	Open	N/A
YT	Open	N/A	X	N/A	N/A
NT	Open	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NU	Open	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(a) Marquis Downs had not been scheduled for racing until May 29, 2020.

(b) (March 25, 2020) Lottery sales continue at retail outlets permitted to remain open under Essential Services list ([SOURCE](#)); some retailers are stopping lottery sales ([SOURCE](#)).

(c) QC is only permitting online purchases of lottery products.

(d) NB racing season events not taking place at this time of year.

(e) (March 20, 2020) Truro Raceway ended simulcast operations; NS racing events not taking place at this time of year.

¹ The Canadian Gaming Association (CGA) sent out an email on March 24, 2020 that provided a *CGA Update on Covid-19 and the Impact on Canada’s Gaming Industry*. In the bulletin they outline the measures that Canada’s gaming industry has taken in support of Canada’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These have included closing down casinos, casino amenities, and community gaming centres.

BC

- (March 16, 2020) [All B.C. Casinos Directed to Temporarily Close](#)
 - “BCLC is confirming that an orderly shutdown of all casinos, community gaming centres and bingo halls across B.C. is underway. We expect the closure to be complete across the province by 11:59 p.m. local time on March 16, 2020.”
- (March 18, 2020) [GREAT CANADIAN GAMING ANNOUNCES THE SUSPENSION OF RACING](#)
 - “Great Canadian Gaming Corporation [TSX:GC] (“Great Canadian” or the “Company”) announces today the temporary suspension until further notice of the conduct of racing and training at the Company’s three racetracks that are currently active. This includes Flamboro Downs in Hamilton, Ontario, Hastings Racecourse in Vancouver, B.C., and Fraser Downs in Surrey, B.C.”
- (March 18, 2020) [BCLC Temporarily Closes Prize Payout Locations](#)
 - “BCLC is temporarily closing its prize payout centres located in the Kamloops head office and Vancouver corporate office. The closure is in effect as of 4:30 p.m., March 18, 2020. BCLC made this decision in order to protect our players and our staff given the advice the Provincial Health Officer has provided to the public in relation to social distancing. **BCLC lottery products remain available for purchase online at Playnow.com, the BCLC Lotto! App and at lottery retailers throughout the province.** For those who wish to claim or have tickets that are close to expiry, BCLC is implementing alternative prize claim processes during this temporary closure period.”

AB

- (March 17, 2020) [COVID-19 \(novel coronavirus\) Information](#) [AGLC]
 - “Earlier today, the Government of Alberta declared a public health emergency. Effective immediately, all casinos, racing entertainment centres and bingo halls will close until further notice.”
- (March 17, 2020) [Q&A: Response to closure of licensed gaming and liquor venues](#) [AGLC]
 - **“Will this impact liquor-licensed venues with VLTs?**
Yes. In an effort to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus, VLTs provincewide are shut down.”
 - **“What about First Nations Casinos and First Nation Charities?**
Host First Nations casinos are also closed until further notice. Host First Nations charities

will resume charitable gaming events when the casinos are permitted to reopen.”

- **“Will bingos be closing as well?**
Yes, bingo halls are closed as well, as announced by the Government of Alberta.”
- (March 17, 2020) [COVID-19 \(novel coronavirus\) - Statement from Horse Racing Alberta](#)
 - “With the recent COVID-19 announcement by the Alberta Government, Horse Racing Alberta (HRA) in co-operation with our Stakeholders have been left with no choice but to temporarily suspend racing in the best interest of public safety.”
- (March 19, 2020) [Western Canada Lottery Corporation \(WCLC\) Home Page](#)
 - “As of March 19, 2020, all lottery prize offices in WCLC’s region are closed to the public until further notice. If you have a winning ticket, you can still claim your prize. Read about how to claim prizes here.”
 - [COVID-19 Pandemic Response](#)
“Can I still buy lottery tickets at retail?
At this time, the lottery retail network in the Prairie Provinces and the North remains available for sales and validation through those Lotto Spot locations that choose to continue the services. We are aware that some retailers have made the decision for their own businesses to suspend the sale of lottery during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we respect those choices.”

SK

- (March 15, 2020) [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Preparedness / TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF SIGA OPERATIONS](#)
 - “The health and safety of our employees, guests and community members is our top priority. Based on recommendations from government and public health officials on the COVID-19 pandemic, SIGA’s Board and leadership has made the decision to temporarily suspend all operations at SIGA Casinos for two weeks, at which time we will reassess the situation. **These temporary closures came into effect at the end of the gaming day March 16, 2020 at all SIGA Casinos in Saskatchewan.**”
- (March 17, 2020) [Temporary Closure of Casinos Regina and Moose Jaw](#)
 - “The safety of guests and employees at Casinos Regina and Moose Jaw is paramount. As such, SaskGaming is heeding the advice of public health officials on the COVID-19 outbreak and will suspend operations and temporarily close Casinos Regina and Moose Jaw until further notice. **This closure is effective at the end of the gaming day today – 2 a.m. on March 17, 2020 at Casino Moose Jaw and 4 a.m. on March 17, 2020 at Casino Regina.**”

- (March 19, 2020) [Western Canada Lottery Corporation \(WCLC\) Home Page](#)
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- (March 20, 2020) [Questions & Answers for Liquor Permittees \(during COVID-19 pandemic\)](#) [SLGA]
 - **“What are the new restrictions for bars, nightclubs and lounges?”**
 Effective immediately, all Saskatchewan nightclubs, bars, lounges and similar facilities (manufacturer’s hospitality suites) must close for business. They can provide pick up service with two metre distancing between the employee and the customer who is picking up the order. Alcohol can only be sold in closed, sealed containers.”

MB

- (March 13, 2020) [COVID-19 Response](#) [MBLL]
 - “updates Casinos of Winnipeg message to include closure of table games”
 - “posts first message to Casinos of Winnipeg customers”
- (March 16, 2020) [COVID-19 Response](#) [MBLL]
 - “updates Casinos of Winnipeg message to include closure of all bingo games”
 - “updates Casinos of Winnipeg message to include customer spacing/social distancing at restaurants and between electronic games, elimination of self-serve coffee”
- (March 17, 2020) [COVID-19 Response](#) [MBLL]
 - “Updates Casinos of Winnipeg message to include closure of the Casinos of Winnipeg and the Shark Club Gaming Centre”
- (March 18, 2020) [Casinos of Winnipeg & Shark Club Gaming Centre: Closed](#) [MBLL]

- “The Casinos of Winnipeg and Shark Club Gaming Centre are now closed until further notice. **PlayNow.com remains open for people who would like to play online.** Our focus remains on the health and safety of our customers and employees as we navigate these unprecedented times. Thank you for your patience and understanding.”
- MB First Nations Casinos
 - (no date) [South Beach Casino & Resort](#)
“South Beach Casino & Resort is closed until further notice.”
 - (March 17, 2020) [Aseneskak Casino](#)
“Based on recommendations from government and public health officials on the COVID-19 pandemic, Aseneskak Casino Board of Directors has made the decision to temporarily suspend all casino operations for the next two weeks, at which time we will re-assess the situation. These temporary closures are effective as of the 12:00 midnight, March 17, 2020.”
 - (March 18, 2020) [Sand Hills Casino](#)
“We care about the health & safety of our guests and employees. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, as of March 18th we are: TEMPORARILY CLOSED”
- (March 19, 2020) [Western Canada Lottery Corporation \(WCLC\) Home Page](#)
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- (March 19, 2020) [ASSINIBOIA DOWNS TO TEMPORARILY CLOSE ITS FACILITIES TO THE PUBLIC FOR TWO WEEKS / SIMULCAST WAGERING THROUGH HPIbet PLATFORM CONTINUES](#)
 - “With the intent to be proactive and to do our part to pull together with our fellow Manitobans to assist in preventive measures to address the COVID-19 situation, Assiniboia Downs is announcing that we will be closing our facility to the public effective at midnight tonight (March 18). This will include the 140 VLT machine Club West Gaming Lounge, our on site simulcast area and our food and beverage facilities. All employees currently on the payroll will be paid during this period. ‘Though we were

presented with the option to keep every other VLT machine operational and our horse race simulcast area and food services available, we felt we needed to try and not just meet but exceed our corporate responsibility obligations to our community and take these measures. We believe we have a part to play in assisting with curbing and slowing the spread of COVID-19 and that is a role that we are embracing with this announcement today.’ said Assiniboia Downs’ CEO Darren Dunn.”

ON

- (no date) [OLG Charitable Gambling Home](#) [OLG]
 - “CUSTOMER ADVISORY: All Ontario Charitable Gaming Centres have voluntarily closed, on a temporary basis. Learn more at your local Charitable Gaming Centre’s website.”
- (March 15, 2020) [ALL ONTARIO CASINOS TO TEMPORARILY CLOSE](#) [OLG]
 - “The health and safety of casino customers and employees is a priority for OLG and its service providers. OLG, working with all our casino service providers, is confirming that an orderly shutdown of all casinos across Ontario has begun. We expect the closure to be complete within approximately 24 hours. This action is consistent with the recommendations of the province’s Chief Medical Officer of Health related to new precautionary measures for COVID-19. OLG will provide an update on when the casinos will re-open, taking into account guidance from public health authorities.”
- (March 17, 2020) [OLG PRIZE CENTRE TO TEMPORARILY CLOSE / LOTTERY SALES CONTINUE AT RETAIL AND PLAYOLG.CA](#) [OLG]
 - “The health and safety of customers and employees is a priority for OLG. Based on guidance from public health authorities, the OLG Prize Centre at Yonge and Dundas Street in Toronto will temporarily close as of 6 p.m., Tuesday March 17, 2020. During this closure: Customers can continue to redeem lottery prizes of up to \$999.90 at any one of the 10,000 lottery retail outlets provincewide. The payment of these prizes is subject to the availability of cash at specific outlets Customers can continue to mail their prize claims of up to \$9,999.90, following the instructions on OLG.ca or by calling the OLG Support Centre at 1-800-387-0098”
- (March 18, 2020) [GREAT CANADIAN GAMING ANNOUNCES THE SUSPENSION OF RACING](#)
 - “Great Canadian Gaming Corporation [TSX:GC](“Great Canadian” or the “Company”) announces today the temporary suspension until further notice of the conduct of racing and training at the Company’s three racetracks that are currently active. This includes Flamboro Downs in Hamilton, Ontario, Hastings Racecourse in Vancouver, B.C., and Fraser Downs in Surrey, B.C.”

- (March 23, 2020) [Live standardbred racing temporarily halted in Ontario; Ontario Racing to continue providing regular industry updates, news, features and more](#) [Ontario Racing]
 - “Although live standardbred racing in Ontario has been temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario Racing will continue to provide horsepeople and industry stakeholders with important updates through its newly created task force, as well as comprehensive coverage of all three breeds in the province.”

QC

- (March 13, 2020) [Québec Casinos Closed](#)
 - “As per the Direction de la santé publique du Québec’s guidelines, and as a precautionary measure, the government has decided to close Québec casinos until further notice.”
- (March 13, 2020?) [Closure of the Salons de jeux du Québec](#)
 - “Following the guidelines of Direction de Santé publique du Québec, the Salons de jeux du Québec close their doors for safety reasons. This is a government decision that will remain in place until further notice.”
- (March 14, 2020) [Arrêt du jeu Kinzo](#)
 - “À titre de mesure préventive supplémentaire, Loto-Québec a pris la décision de cesser ses activités de Kinzo dès le 14 mars, et ce pour une durée indéterminée. La santé et la sécurité de nos clients sont notre priorité. Merci de votre compréhension.”
- (March 13 or 14, 2020?) [Loto-Quebec is shutting down its Video Lottery Terminals in bars all over Quebec. We are informing our retailers as we speak. #covid19](#)
- (March 16, 2020) [Quebec betting parlors closure](#) [Hippodrome Trois-Rivières]
 - “In compliance with the government instructions concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, all betting parlors in Quebec closed their doors on Monday, March 16, until further notice. Bettors can however indulge their passion by betting online on the HPI website at www.hpibet.com.”
- (March 18, 2020) [Suspension of the paying of prizes in person at Loto-Québec prize claims centres](#)
 - “As part of the collective effort to fight COVID-19 transmission and in order to protect the health of our customers and employees, we have decided to suspend the paying of prizes in person in our prize claim centres located at:”

- (March 20, 2020) [Retailers and kiosks suspend the sale of lotteries](#)
 - “In light of the Premier’s press briefing today and in following with its commitment to abide by the measures issued by the Government, Loto-Québec is taking steps to suspend the sale of lottery tickets and to deactivate its sales terminals as quickly as possible at retailers and in kiosks operated by non-profit organizations. The Corporation is currently contacting its 8,500 retailers and kiosk operators in shopping centres to inform them of the details of this new measure. Loto-Québec is also coordinating with the other provinces relative to Canada-wide lotteries. **Loto-Québec reminds its customers that tickets can still be purchased and checked online at loteries.lotoquebec.com.** All past purchases remain valid and ticket holders will take part in the draws for which their tickets were purchased.”

NB

- (March 16, 2020) [An update to players from Atlantic Lottery President and CEO Brent Scrimshaw](#)
 - “Second, video lottery operations in all four Atlantic provinces have been suspended. The video lottery terminals were shut down at midnight March 15 and will remain suspended for two weeks. Atlantic Lottery recognizes the economic implications this may have on our retail partners, and we look forward to working together again in the future.”
- (March 16, 2020) [Casino New Brunswick will temporarily suspend all operations as of closing tonight Monday, March 16th at 3am](#)
 - “In conjunction with NBLGC, Casino New Brunswick will temporarily suspend all operations (including Hotel, Casino, Restaurants, Spa and Concerts) as of at closing tonight Monday, March 16th at 3am. (For Hotel effective after check-out Monday, March 16 at noon.)”
- (March 16, 2020)
 - “Starting at 2 p.m. March 16, Grey Rock Casino in Edmundston, New Brunswick, will be closing its doors for an indefinite period for the safety of our employees and casino customers. All events and promotional dates will be postponed.” [SOURCE](#)

PE

- (March 16, 2020) [An update to players from Atlantic Lottery President and CEO Brent Scrimshaw](#)
 - “Following the advice regarding social distancing from Health Canada and the provincial departments of Health, Atlantic Lottery has taken significant additional steps since our last statement. First, the **Red Shores Racetrack and Casino locations in Charlottetown and Summerside, P.E.I. have been closed as of March 15.** This decision will remain in

place for two weeks and will be reassessed on an ongoing basis.”

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NS

- (March 15, 2020) [Casino Nova Scotia and Sydney are closed to the public until further notice](#)
 - “...closing Casino Nova Scotia’s two locations, in Sydney and Halifax, to the public Sunday, March 15 at midnight. Both locations will be closed until further notice and will reopen when appropriate.”
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YT

- (March 13, 2020)
 - “Dawson City’s [Diamond Tooth Gertie’s Gambling Hall is closed until further notice](#) and the Klondike Visitors Association (KVA) has cancelled all of its events that were going to be part of this weekend’s Thaw di Gras Spring Festival. Marketing manager Paul Robitaille said the KVA, the festival’s main organizer, is recommending that all the other community groups that had organized events for Thaw di Gras also cancel, amid concerns about COVID-19.” [SOURCE](#)
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