



# CANADIAN GAMING ASSOCIATION

## **CGA Presentation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on Bill C-218 February 25, 2021**

Good afternoon and thank you for opportunity to appear before you today.

I want to thank the Members of Parliament for your leadership over the past year. During these very difficult times, your efforts to support individuals and business are welcomed and are to be commended.

The Canadian Gaming Association is a national trade association representing gaming facility operators, manufacturers of gaming technology and equipment, and a wide array of suppliers of goods and services to Canada's gaming industry.

With over \$17 billion in annual revenue, Canada's gaming industry is present in every region of the country. Just over 100 MPs have major gaming facilities in their communities.

Our industry supports over 180,000 jobs across Canada, contributing almost \$19 billion in value-added GDP. We purchase over \$14.5 billion annually in goods and services, much of that from the communities in which we operate.

Our industry, like so many others, has been severely impacted by the pandemic. Many of our facilities have not re-opened since last March, or when permitted to open, have done so with very limited capacity. Many of the 90,000 front line employees have not be able to come to work this past year, creating significant and devastating impacts on families and communities.

This is one reason why our industry continues to pursue the proposed amendment to the Criminal Code that you are studying. As we look towards recovery, having the ability to offer single-event sports wagering when we are able to re-open safely will be a tremendous benefit to Canadian gaming operators and their employees.

While we have been closed, respecting the directives from our local public health authorities, offshore online sports books and bookmaking operations run by organized crime continue to operate. Annually, Canadians place over \$4 billion in wagers with offshore sports books and approximately \$10 billion through organized crime operations.

It's time to level the playing field. It's time to give Canadian gaming operators the opportunity to offer the same product in a legal, licensed, and highly regulated environment and see the benefits flow back to our communities and to the public good.



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Our industry alongside our provincial government partners have been requesting this amendment for over a decade.

As you will learn through these hearings, the amendment is supported by business and labour organizations, law enforcement professionals, professional and amateur sports organizations, municipalities, and responsible gambling organizations. It's time to get it done.

In 1985, the Federal and Provincial governments agreed that the provinces would have the exclusive right to operate and regulate gaming within their jurisdictions.

Over the past 30 + years provincial governments have worked to create safe and highly regulated gaming environments. We have developed and implemented world-class responsible gaming programs that allow Canadian operators to deliver high-quality gaming experiences in safe and secure environments.

It is the provinces, through their provincial gaming regulators, who will work to ensure sports wagering is delivered with the proper level of controls and oversight. This includes:

- Age and identity verification to ensure minors cannot participate.
- Information & data sharing between sports organizations, sport book operators, gaming regulators and law enforcement to protect the integrity of matches and prevent match fixing.
- Prohibition on players, coaches and officials from wagering on sports.
- Standards for advertising and marketing.
- Access to responsible gambling tools and self-exclusion options

It is only through the regulation of this activity that we can bring it out from the shadows where it currently operates and into the light where we can ensure that proper player protections are available and enforced.

This too is the only way that Canadian technology companies like Toronto based sportsbook operator theScore, Vancouver based gaming technology developer Fans Unite, and Halifax based sports statics and data provider Covers Media Group, can grow their businesses.

These are companies based in Canada that provide goods and services to a global customer base. They are innovators, employers creating high value jobs.



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If Canada continues to criminalize single-event betting, the appetite to continue to drive innovation in this industry might not be there, and the sports betting industry is also likely to stagnate. Provinces need to be allowed to give consumers more and better choice on where they're betting, and I'd obviously like to see homegrown companies such as these be able to thrive in their home markets.

In closing, the common sentiment by all stakeholders is that this legislation is long overdue.

Only by regulating single-event sports betting can we be sure that players are protected, that funds are returned to the provinces in which they're generated, and that Canadian businesses have the opportunity to grow new revenue streams.