

# RESPONSIBLE GAMING DEVICE



## Summary of the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation Research Project

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## Research Project Overview

### The Background Leading Up to the Research

In April 2005, the Nova Scotia Government released: A Better Balance: Nova Scotia's First Gaming Strategy. In it was an initiative to pilot a card-based player management tool on VLTs. The goal of this research was to determine if responsible gaming features could be of value to VLT players in informing player decisions and fostering responsible play.

Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation commissioned independent research firms to conduct and assess this groundbreaking research. Omnifacts Bristol conducted the field test and provided primarily a qualitative analysis. Focal Research Consultants Ltd was retained to lead the in-depth quantitative analysis of the field test data.

Techlink Entertainment, the company that created the Responsible Gaming Device, also commissioned Dr. Bo Bernhard, Director of Gambling Research at the International Gaming Institute (University of Nevada, Las Vegas) to analyze player data through both a qualitative and quantitative review. **The full research reports by Omnifacts Bristol, Focal Research, and Dr. Bo Bernhard are available on NSGC's website at [www.nsgc.ca](http://www.nsgc.ca).**

### The Four Stages of the Research

**Stage I** (March 2005 to June 2005): research conducted at all nine Windsor and Mount Uniacke VLT sites with 120 pre-recruited players.

**Stage II** (July 2005 to September 2005): based on results of Stage I, modifications/re-testing of the system and features, and planning the execution of Stage III took place.

**Stage III** (October 2005 to March 2006): all players in the Windsor and Mount Uniacke area were issued a player card and were required to use the card if they chose to play a VLT.

**Stage IV** Analysis conducted on the research data from Stage III.

### The Five Responsible Gaming Features

- The Account Summary tool allowed players to track their expenditures, how much they won or lost in a day, week, month, or year.
- The Live Action tool displayed money spent, won, or lost during their play session.
- The Money Limits feature allowed players to set specific spending limits for a day, week, or month.
- The Play Limits feature allowed players to self-exclude from playing BLTs for certain days, months, or years.
- The 48-Hour Stop feature allowed players to quickly exclude themselves for a 48-hour period.

CHART 8: Support for One Card Per Player

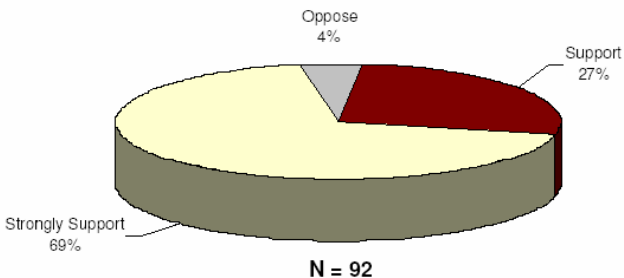
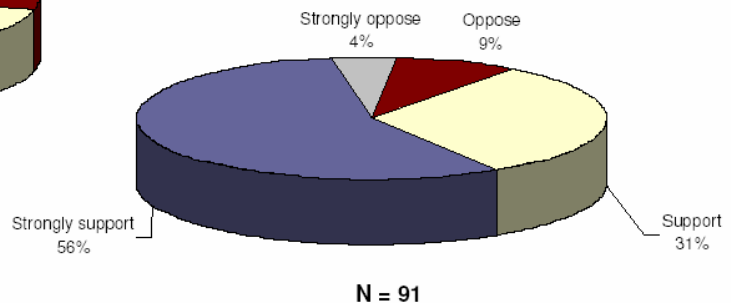


CHART 7: Support of Mandatory Usage



SOURCE: Final Survey

## Research Highlights

### Omnifacts Bristol Research

#### *Qualitative Research Results (self-reported)*

- Players who used the features said they decreased their spending and time played.
- Players and the public in the test area strongly supported making these features available to VLT players.
- Players said the features encouraged responsible play and helped them set a budget and stick to it.
- Recommendation: Make the system available on a voluntary basis and continue to monitor and evaluate the impact

### Dr. Bo Bernhard, International Gaming Institute

#### *Qualitative/Quantitative Research Results*

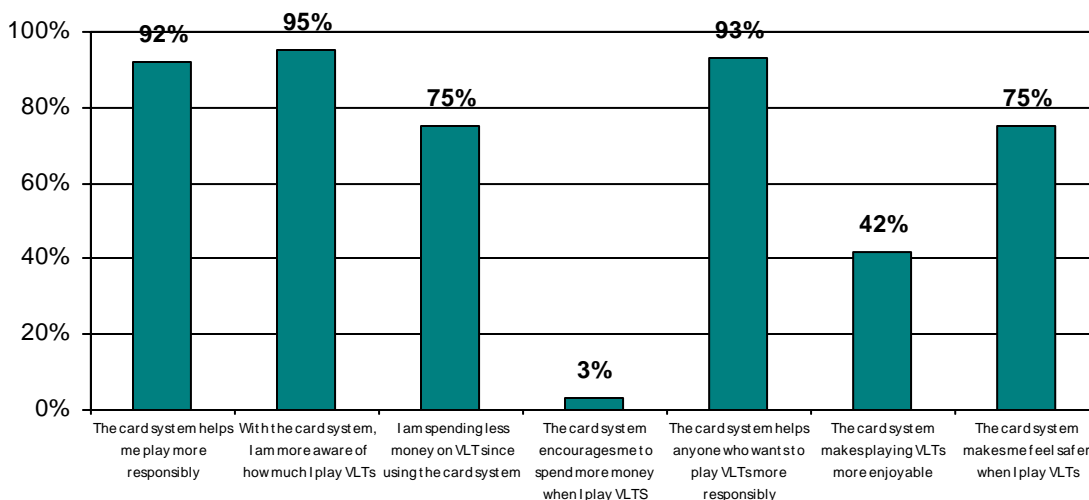
- Players liked that the use of the features was voluntary.
- Players who gambled more were more likely to use the features.
- Players expressed some concerns about privacy and security issues with a card-based system.
- Players felt the features gave them more control over their spending and playing.
- Players felt these features would be most useful with “no”, “low”, or “moderate” risk players – in keeping with the intended target audience.
- Recommendations: Nova Scotia should proceed with further implementation and testing of these features on VLTs as one part of the Province’s comprehensive responsible gambling approach. Additional responsible gambling and educational messages should be added to the screens to increase value to players.

### Focal Research Consultants Ltd.

#### *Quantitative Research Results*

- 71% of all regular players tried the features (Account Summary, Live Action, Money Limits, Play Limits, 48 Hour Cool Down).
- About half (48%) or all regular VLT players kept using the features after they had tried them.
- Use of the features helped players to reduce the amount they spent each time but they played longer indicating they made better decisions about when to stop.
- There was a positive impact detected for lower-risk and moderate-risk players, which was consistent with the objective of assisting players to make more informed decisions about their gambling in order to help prevent future problems.
- There were no negative impacts found for use of any of the features during the six-month trial.

Recommendations: Introduce a player tracking system for the multi-channel video lottery program in Nova Scotia with mandatory registration and voluntary access to the features. Continue to conduct additional research to explore player behavior and response to the system in order to inform and support province-wide implementation of the features and future management of the VLT program as a whole.



## Expert Reviews

**Dr. Harold J. Wynne**  
**Wynne Resources, Edmonton**

I applaud the efforts of the NSGC to commission the appropriate research and expert opinion to support this decision and I admire the commitment of the organization to help Nova Scotia gamblers make informed choices about their VLT play. These RGFs (Responsible Gaming Features) will enable gamblers who choose to use them, to monitor their own play and this monitoring, in itself, may help some gamblers limit their play or quit playing altogether.

I believe the most effective RGFs are those that directly influence the EGM (Electronic Gaming Machines) gambler's play. Information on how much the player has spent at any given session and/or over the past week or month is very tangible and will cause some to ponder their expenditure patterns and limit their play or cease altogether. It will be very important to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the RGFs mounted on the Nova Scotia VLTs and I am pleased to see that NSGC plans to conduct this research.

I am most impressed by the commitment of Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation to help VLT players control their play...I truly believe that NSGC is genuinely committed to offering the safest VLT gaming environment possible and, in this quest, Nova Scotia is clearly leading all other jurisdictions world-wide. I strongly encourage you to share your vision for VLT gaming with other Canadian and international jurisdictions and to continue your commitment to helping problem gamblers.

### Focal Research Consultants

There was a positive impact detected for lower-risk and moderate-risk players that was consistent with NSGC's objective to assist players to make more informed decisions about their gambling.

**Dr. Bo Bernhard**  
**International Gaming Institute**  
**University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

Given the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation's stated desire to promote responsible gambling behaviors, it would seem that this device provides a powerful "tool in the tool chest" for players seeking to do exactly that."

**Dr. John McMullin**  
**Professor of Sociology and Criminology**  
**Saint Mary's University**

In conclusion, the research findings evince a clear direction for policy formation and action:

1. Implement a player card technology system on a province-wide basis to assist play management and facilitate decision making gambling operators, managers, and overseers;
2. Implement all of the RG use features that were tested in the trial into the province-wide system;
3. Implement a voluntary use and mandatory player registration system. While there is some variance in this research concerning the preferred type of registration system, the weight of the evidence collected on Nova Scotia players suggests good support for mandatory registration;
4. Accompany the implementation of the province-wide RG and technology system with a social marketing awareness campaign that educates players, stakeholders, and the public about the utility of the technology as part of a comprehensive gambling strategy linking prevention, counseling, treatment, and consumer protection; and
5. Conduct continuous research using the best comparative data available (pre-measures) on player conduct in advance of system implementation in order to have a solid foundation for RG impact analysis and consumer satisfaction outcomes going forward.

Such an approach to VLT policy seems sound and sensible, and is in compliance with the evidence based findings of the research studies.