

Laying the Cards Out for Charitable Gaming in Alberta

For many years, RMA has advocated for a change to the province’s charitable gaming model to more equitably distribute funds to charities in rural communities. While many Albertans have experience spending long hours as a casino volunteer, many may not be aware of the link between where in the province their organization is located, and the amount of funding received from casino events. When combined with the reality that charitable organizations in urban areas are more likely to have high

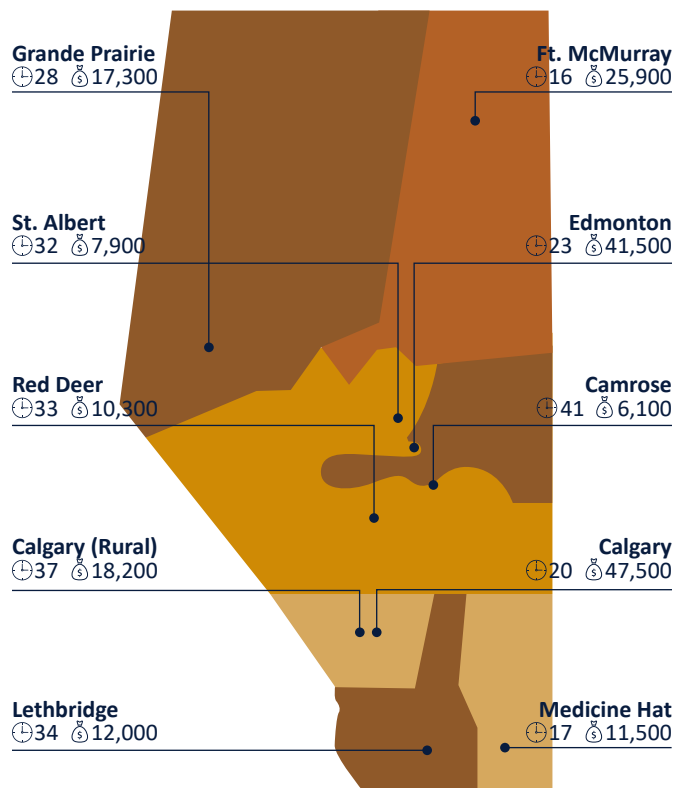
capacity and access to other funding sources than those in rural areas, the current model results in significant inequities that have very real impacts on the quality of community services across the province. Part 1 of RMA’s “Losing Bet” series provides an overview of the province’s charitable gaming model, setting the stage for future weeks, when the series will explain why the system doesn’t work for rural communities and how it can be repaired.

Alberta is the only province in Canada that requires charities to provide volunteers on-site at casino events that support charitable organizations. Only charitable or religious groups may conduct charitable gaming activities and groups that conduct charitable gaming activities must use the money for charitable or religious purposes only. Programs and services that these charities support include things such as youth groups, social and community development programs, sports, cultural programs, training and education opportunities, and more. These are essential aspects to thriving communities.

As this map shows, Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC), which is the agency responsible for regulating charitable gaming in Alberta, has organized the province into eight different charitable gaming regions.

Organizations can only receive a license to host a casino in their region. These regions pool casino funds quarterly and distribute the funds evenly to all organizations that have participated, regardless of how much revenue was generated by individual casino events. Each region also has differing wait times to host an event. Long average wait times mixed with the pooling of a smaller level of overall funding results in significantly lower revenues for organizations in some regions.

The discrepancies between urban and rural charitable gaming access and revenues generated are clear. Rural organizations are waiting longer to participate in casino events and are receiving less money when they do.



In the coming weeks, the “Losing Bet” series will provide more details as to how the system treats rural and urban charities so differently, the impacts on access to revenues, and common-sense ways to improve the system so that all organizations receive equal benefits for equal work regardless of where they are located.