

## Nova Scotia Gaming

Nova Scotia Gaming is responsible for the business of gaming in Nova Scotia. Staff of Nova Scotia Gaming have been transitioned to a division within the Department of Finance & Treasury Board. Nova Scotia Gaming is governed by *Part 1 of the Gaming Control Act* and is charged with leading an economically sustainable and socially responsible gaming industry for the benefit of Nova Scotians and their communities.

### Overview of Gaming in Nova Scotia

- The Nova Scotia Government, and ultimately the people of Nova Scotia, are the shareholders and owners of the gaming industry in the province.
- The industry is licensed and regulated by the Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel and Tobacco Division of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.
- Nova Scotia Gaming provides vision, strategy and operational direction in the delivery of responsible and entertaining gaming products and ensures that the gaming industry is being run in a manner that is as socially responsible as possible while generating reasonable profits.
- Regulated gaming operations in Nova Scotia include ticket lotteries, video lotteries and casinos. The day-to-day operations of these business lines are carried out by operators, Atlantic Lottery and Casino Nova Scotia. Atlantic Lottery operates the ticket and video lottery businesses and Casino Nova Scotia operates casinos in Halifax and Sydney.
- The following is a chronological list of developments in the gaming industry in Nova Scotia.
  - ▶ 1976 – Ticket lottery products were introduced across Canada, including Nova Scotia.
  - ▶ 1991 – Video lottery terminals (VLTs) were legally introduced in the province in convenience stores and laundromats as a strategy to combat illegal, grey market VLTs.
  - ▶ 1993 – VLTs were restricted to liquor-licensed establishments.
  - ▶ 1995 – Government created the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation to manage the industry.
  - ▶ 1995 – Casinos were introduced in Halifax and Sydney.
  - ▶ 1995 – VLTs offered in Mi'kmaw communities.
  - ▶ 1998 – The Province imposed a cap on the number of VLTs that can operate in liquor-licensed establishments at 3,234 (excluding those in Mi'kmaw communities).
  - ▶ 2000 – Permanent Halifax casino opened.
  - ▶ 2004 – Playsphere, Atlantic Lottery's online transactional website launched.
  - ▶ 2005 – Casino adopts ticket in / ticket out technology.
  - ▶ 2009 – New ticket lottery regulations introduced to enhance player protection, and security and integrity controls.
  - ▶ 2011 – Barcodes introduced on break-open tickets to enhance validation controls.
  - ▶ 2012 – Nova Scotia Gaming became the Nova Scotia Provincial Lotteries and Casino Corporation, with a new board made up of three Deputy Ministers, one senior government official and three additional members.
  - ▶ 2013 – New self-ticket checkers were introduced at all ticket lottery retailers in Nova Scotia.
  - ▶ 2015 – A free Atlantic Lottery mobile app launched providing players access to winning numbers, jackpot information, retailer locations and responsible play information.
  - ▶ 2016 & 2017 – Investments in Casino Nova Scotia by Great Canadian Gaming Corporation helped revitalize both the Sydney and Halifax locations.
  - ▶ 2018 – Nova Scotia Provincial Lotteries and Casino Corporation (NSPLCC's) name was changed back to Nova Scotia Gaming.
  - ▶ 2019-20 & 2020-22 – Gaming operations were temporarily closed and/or reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - ▶ 2022 – Launched single-event sports betting in Nova Scotia.
  - ▶ 2022 – Launched online casino-style games in Nova Scotia.

- In April 2005, the Province released a five-year Gaming Strategy, with a focus on responsible gambling, to initiate change in the industry. In March 2011, the Province released the current Responsible Gaming Strategy, with a similar focus on responsible gambling.
- Specific changes that have taken place since 2005 with respect to VLTs include:
  - ▶ Reduced the hours of operation on July 1, 2005 with machines being shut off at midnight, eliminating the midnight to close timeframe;
  - ▶ Removed 800 VLTs from profit retailers on November 1, 2005;
  - ▶ Removed an additional 200 VLTs throughout 2007-08 for a total reduction of 1,000 VLTs, reducing the number of VLTs by approximately 30%, taking it from 3,234 to 2,234;
  - ▶ Implemented two software changes beginning January 1, 2006, which slowed game speed by 30% and disabled the “stop button” feature;
  - ▶ Introduced the My-Play System, a card-based responsible gambling tool that was integrated into every VLT in Nova Scotia during the first and second quarter of 2010-11.
  - ▶ Maintained the moratorium on increasing the number of VLTs in Nova Scotia;
  - ▶ Introduced a natural attrition plan to reduce the number of VLTs in Nova Scotia; and,
  - ▶ Implement mandatory enrolment of the My-Play System for all players in Nova Scotia on April 1, 2012. On August 20, 2014, Government announced its decision to remove the My-Play System from all VLTs in Nova Scotia as it was not meeting objectives.
- Prior to the 2005 Gaming Strategy, Nova Scotia Gaming’s revenue was \$495 million, and in 2014, it was \$402 million. Gaming revenue in 2021-22 was \$429.4 million, noting that Nova Scotia Gaming and its operators responded to the COVID-19 global pandemic, by closing casinos and adjusting business practices.
- Other forms of gambling available in Nova Scotia that are not managed by Nova Scotia Gaming include: video lottery in Mi’kmaw communities; poker games in bars, clubs and residences; Internet gambling (with the exception of Atlantic Lottery’s online distribution channel); and live harness racing which began in Nova Scotia in 1865 and continues today.
- Charitable gaming (e.g., bingos, ticket lotteries, Chase the Ace and carnival games of chance) are conducted by organizations raising funds for charitable purposes. This gaming activity is licensed and monitored by the Alcohol, Gaming, Fuel & Tobacco Division of Service Nova Scotia.