

BC Lotteries Is Actively Ripping Off Taxpayers

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Friday, October 01, 2010

<http://politicsrespun.org/2010/10/bc-lotteries-is-actively-ripping-off-taxpayers/>

[BC Lotteries' new PlayNow.com](#) site is actively ripping off BC taxpayers by establishing a \$100 bonus for new registrants that people can extract after depositing \$100 and playing for just two short games, taking less than a minute.

Then when the CBC reported on this gaffe, BC Lotteries claimed the promotion wasn't an error or problem, like their massive security breach on the day they went live a few months ago. Even if the promotion leads to an increase in revenue, the government is throwing \$100 bills out the window to people who have no intention of losing their own \$100 on their gambling site.

Most online gambling sites that offer rebates or bonuses require a substantially longer amount of play before spending its commissions on promotional rebates. And even then, players don't often get a bonus equal to their deposit.

The [CBC reported](#):

The lottery spokesperson, who declined to be quoted by name, said the \$100 bonus works because most players do not cash out after one hand, even if they win.

If I were the spokesperson, I too would not want to be quoted by name because this is such a foolishly, amateur promotion allowing people to rip off the BC taxpayers.

A soulful Robin Hood could, however, exercise this loophole, pull out the bonus cash, then donate it to one of the thousands of community groups that have had their funding cut from provincial budget cutbacks to pay for the defunding that has come from tax cuts for the rich and corporations.

In the end, BC Lotteries might be gambling on this promotion not putting them in a deficit position. If they profit more than the total of these \$100 give-aways, then they won't lose money for the BC government. What they will do is forego that much more revenue because of this foolish gift.

How do we find out, though?

If you didn't know, citizens can file Freedom of Information requests with the provincial government. Despite the culture of fear and secrecy in the BC Liberal government, it is possible to extract actual useful information from them, though it takes 30 business days [assuming there are no extensions]. The request is free, though the government may bill you for recovering the information, but we can submit a fee waiver request to sometimes avoid charges.

Recently, the government has centralized a process to receive FOI requests if you don't feel like writing a

detailed letter. They have [set up a webpage here that allows you to just fill in a form with your request](#). I strongly recommend you use the form if you want to get information that the government doesn't provide on its websites. And if you encounter problems or fee assessments, check out the [fantastic help with filing FOI requests here](#).

So, below is the FOI request I submitted this morning to BC Lottery Corporation and the Ministry of Housing and Social Development [which has oversight over BCLC]. In mid-November I should have the results, barring complications:

The BC Lottery Corporation ran a \$100 promotion from July 15 to October 5, 2010 on its PlayNow.com site, according to information here:

<https://www.playnow.com/promotions/100-deposit-july-10/>

Many players signed up, deposited \$100, made \$100 in bets, collected the \$100 bonus, bet the bonus to convert it into cash, then withdrew their bonus and what was left of the original deposit. I would like to know how many people did that.

Since the BCLC would be doing a business analysis of the results of this promotion, please send me the following in electronic format:

1. A summary of the costs and accompanying revenue gains from the promotion.
2. The number of \$100 bonuses claimed by players between July 15, 2010 and October 5, 2010.
3. The number of players who withdrew from their account what was left of their deposit plus their \$100 bonuses within less than one hour after making their deposit.
4. The gross and net revenue that PlayNow.com earned from July 15, 2010 to October 5, 2010.

In time, I will update this story to see what kind of information the government releases regarding this foolish promotion so we can see if it contributed to an actual revenue gain, and whether it was worth it.

And if you have any suggestions for requests that I missed in what I asked above, post them here as comments or email them to me and I can amend my FOI request or put in a new request.