

Newslink

Problem Gambling News & Information

A source of news, views and trends



Winter 1998/1999



Teens and Gambling

Lack of Awareness Contributes to Increasing Number

FEATURE ARTICLE

Interview with
Jeffery Derevensky
Professor in the Department of
Educational and Counselling
Psychology at McGill University

CFCG: Our youth study done in 1995 indicated that a very high percentage of adolescents gamble despite laws against underage gambling. What do other recent studies show?

Derevensky: Prevalence studies conducted in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Europe all confirm the rising prevalence rates of youth involvement in both legal and illegal forms of gambling. Estimates are that between 4 to 8 percent of adolescents have a serious gambling problem with another 10 to 14 percent of adolescents at-risk for developing a serious gambling problem.

CFCG: Does this ring any alarm bells for you?

Derevensky: Yes. These percentages are alarmingly high. Retrospective studies have indicated that adults with gambling problems

report the onset of their pathological behaviours to have begun quite early, often between the ages of 9 and 10. A large scale study of adolescents in Alberta found that most problem gamblers began gambling, on average, around the age of 10 with similar results being found in our study of secondary school adolescents and young adults in



Quebec. Yet, for most parents and teens, gambling is viewed as an innocuous behaviour with few negative consequences. But there are consequences.

CFCG: What are some of the consequences?

Derevensky: Problematic gambling among adolescents has been shown to result in increased delinquency and crime, the disruption of relationships and negatively affects overall school performance and work activities. While these youth present themselves differently from adults, they nevertheless have similar characteristics. These adolescents have a preoccupation with gambling - sacrificing school, parents and friends in order to

Continued page 6

Newslink Launched

In response to the growing need for information about problem gambling issues in Ontario and across Canada, the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling has launched Newslink.

Continued on page 2

INSIDE

From the Executive Director	Pg 2
Gambling for Retirement Income? ..	Pg 2
Listening to Teens	Pg 3
And they're off... ..	Pg 4
Battle Brewing?	Pg 4
Helpline Stats	Pg 4
Around the World.....	Pg 5
Certified Gambling Counsellors	Pg 5
The Future Arrives Early	Pg 5
Impact Studies in Ontario.....	Pg 6
Who is the CFCG?.....	Pg 7
Government Gambling Growth	Pg 7
Bilingual Conference:	Pg 8
Well, is there an increase?	Pg 8
Upcoming Events	Pg 8

Continued from Page 1

"In a field that often provokes strong emotions and interests, Newslink will bring news and information about problem gambling issues to information seekers in a balanced and independent way," said Dick Hubbard, Board Chair. "Collection and dissemination of reliable information has always been part of the CFCG mandate. Newslink, to be published four times a year, will fill a gap for this kind of information." Newslink will go to our members, care-providers, news organizations, schools, MPP's, human resource managers, gaming providers and the many others interested in problem and responsible gambling.

Jon Kelly, the Foundation's Executive Director, added: "We welcome comments and suggestions from our readers. We have tried to position Newslink as a key source of reliable information. We want it to be a valuable asset for those who may not have the time to keep abreast of problem gambling developments and related issues. The structure and kinds of articles in Newslink are dynamic and are sensitive to the interests of our readership. We also want it to serve as a forum for readers to share their views and the source of important debate."

CFCG gratefully thanks our sponsors: The Ontario Substance Abuse Bureau (Ministry of Health), Casino Niagara, Casino Rama and Casino Windsor.

From the Executive Director

In recent months, CFCG staff have invested a great deal of energy and time in investigating the best ways to get "problem gambling" messages to a wide audience. That means sorting out what we might say, to whom and how. As a first step the Foundation undertook a public awareness feasibility study along with some analysis of what others have done. This study will be summarized soon and circulated widely.

For this issue of Newslink, we are particularly interested in the activities, attitudes and responses of the teenagers in the study.

Problem gambling, like other areas of human services, is often complex.

Experts often disagree. Information is often contradictory. But, there is a clear picture about teen gambling. The teen

years are the incubation period for later problem and compulsive gambling.

All studies agree that the prevalence of gambling problems among teens is at least twice as high as the adult prevalence. Adults with serious gambling problems are more than likely to have begun their gambling

careers at age 16 or younger.

This is not great news. But, it does say in a loud and clear voice that teens should be a very high priority for problem gambling awareness programs.



Gambling for Retirement Income?

"One in ten Canadians is gambling on a lottery win to help finance retirement."

A recent CIBC sponsored survey found that three quarters of Canadians buy lottery tickets and more than half have been doing so for more than 10 years. Astonishingly, 11 percent are betting that some of their retirement income will come from lottery winnings: 19 percent of those earning less than \$30,000 are looking for the big lotto-jackpot to finance their pension years; and 6 percent of \$80,000 plus earners consider a 6/49 ticket a key to their happiness after age 65.

The Calgary Herald editorial dated January 17 doesn't buy the idea that respondents'

reasons "are as silly as the poll's pipe-dream findings suggest", suggesting instead that the real culprit hindering proper retirement saving are declining incomes and the financial pressures of a consumer society.

A CFCG seniors survey completed in December 1998 shows that the majority of respondents had gambled in the previous six months. Many gamble for "the big win", but how many really gamble for a better retirement? How many feel its "the only way to survive?" It seems that showing people the real odds of winning is essential to public awareness.

Listening to Teens

Teen gambling is very perplexing. All studies suggest that the majority of teens gamble. Teens who gamble run into problems much more quickly than adults. The prevalence of gambling problems is much higher among adolescents than adults. Yet, these problems are practically invisible.

Most counselling agencies see few, if any, teens. Most professionals and parents seem to have little awareness of gambling problems and issues. The media, while apparently addicted to gambling stories, virtually ignore teen gambling.

CFCG decided last fall to take a much closer look at this area. The Foundation wanted to shed more light on teen gambling practices, but more importantly, to explore how best to communicate with young people about problem gambling.

This project - part of a broader study including teens, adults and seniors was carried out in cooperation with Strategic Objectives a prominent communications firm. It was funded through the generous support of Casino Niagara.

The study heard from over eighty adolescents through focus groups and individual interviews in the Greater Toronto Area. The investigation was intended as a first step in understanding how to talk with teens about gambling and its risks.

The CFCG survey discovered that among those aged 16-18 surveyed in the Golden Horseshoe, 74% had participated in at least one form of gambling activity during the

previous six months. Their range of activities was broad-based including a high percentage of participation in games of skill, card games, scratch-and-win, lotteries and raffles. These findings mirror other studies of teen gambling.

The survey revealed that many teens do not see sports lotteries, break-open tickets or lotto tickets as gambling activities. They were introduced to these activities through their parents, malls and stores selling lottery products. Teens are especially influenced by strong advertising messages persuading them that they might win a great deal of money.

More than half (62%) surveyed claim to gamble because they "might win big". Yet, they seemed to have a good sense that chances of that "big win" are very remote.

When asked about potential dangers in gambling and the potential for addiction, the teens in this survey indicated a very high understanding about the risks. On the other hand, they also found it much more exciting than older people did. They appeared to have a sense of the danger but fewer skills in avoiding it and getting help.

From the survey and focus groups, teens indicated a willingness to listen to certain types of messages in certain formats. They much preferred information designed to inform and enable rather than direct and judge.

They want to be engaged rather than told. Helpful messages might include the odds of winning, legal implications, the signs of problem gambling, how to avoid problems and where to go for help.

Those most concerned about problem gambling have their work cut out for them. They need to help young people and those around them to understand and avoid the risks of gambling problems.

"...74% had participated in at least one form of gambling activity..."

"most counselling agencies see few, if any, teens."

STUDIES ON YOUTH GAMBLING.

1998 "Adolescent Gambling Behaviour: A Prevalence Study & Examination of the Correlates Associated With Problem Gambling" - Gupta, R. & Derevensky, I. L.

1998 "Gambling Behaviours Among High School Students in the Quebec Area" - Ladouceur, Robert & Chantal, M. Reault

1998 "Gambling Activities of Young Australians: Developing a Model of Behaviour" - Moore, Susan M., Ohtsuka, Keis

1996 "Adolescents Gambling and Problem Gambling in Alberta" - Smith, G., Wynne, H., Jacobs, D.

1995 "A Follow-up Study of Gambling Behaviour of Adolescent Gamblers: Summary of Finding" - Govoni, R., Rupcich, N., Frisch, G.R.

1994 CFCG/Insight Canada Adolescent Gambling Study

1994 "Gambling Behaviour of Adolescent Gamblers" - Govoni, R., Rupcich, N., Frisch, G. R.

1993 "Gambling & Pathological Gambling in Adolescents" - Fisher, Sue

AND THEY'RE OFF...

In August of 1996 the provincial government announced that VLT's (subsequently slots) would be sited at horse race tracks in Ontario.

Since then there has been much discussion and negotiation among the race track owners and the Ontario Lottery Corporation. Finally, an agreement was concluded this fall. The individual tracks have submitted business plans to the Ontario Lottery Corporation which will operate the slots at their tracks.

In some locations there has been a great deal of controversy around the siting of slots at tracks. At Woodbine in Toronto, City

Council refused to zone the premises for slot use. The Ontario Jockey Club challenged the City's right to do this in court. The court upheld the City's decision. In the end, Al Leach, Minister of Municipal Affairs, using a Ministerial Order forced the City to issue the building permits required. This caused more protest from groups supported by John Sewell, former Mayor of Toronto, alleging heavy-handedness by the province.

In smaller communities such as Clinton, Ontario, Ontario Citizens Against Gambling Expansion supported the local Social Action Committee in holding a "for" and "against" debate last December. In a subsequent press conference, John Kindt, a professor from

Illinois, called for gambling to be made illegal. OCAGE is against expansion of gambling into Ontario communities without prior impact studies and public consent. Jane Holmes, Executive Director of the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association has consistently emphasized the role of slot revenues in revitalizing the race tracks and creating local employment.

Windsor Raceway was the first to open its doors to slots in mid December. Others will follow. By years-end, the eighteen Ontario race tracks may have as many as 8000 slot machines, roughly equal to the number of slots currently in Ontario's three casinos.

Battle Brewing?

In 1996 the US Congress created the National Gambling Impact Study Commission (NGISC) to examine the political, economic and social effects of gambling in that country. In the past eighteen months its diverse membership has heard the testimony of many experts, organizations and communities and has commissioned millions of dollars worth of research.

A battle is brewing among the members on exactly how to prevent gambling problems, who is financially responsible and how much should be set aside by governments and the industry. The casino industry is arguing that much of the problem stems from other kinds of gambling such as lotteries and illegal gambling for which they should not be financially responsible. However, the report is expected to reflect consensus among the members on many issues including the need

to emphasize awareness, prevention, treatment, prevalence and the seriousness of problem and compulsive gambling. Many are hoping that there will be a recommendation for governments and gambling operators to develop responsible gambling programs and provide adequate funding from their profits.

The National Council on Problem Gambling made 36 recommendations to the NGISC. Some relate to the description of problem gambling, others to federal funding and research. One recommendation was for the establishment of a "National Institute on Problem Gambling". Copies of these recommendations are available from the Foundation.

The panel is scheduled to report its findings in mid-June. It is certain to draw increased attention to gambling issues in this country as well as the United States.

Helpline Stats

The Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline (OPGH) has just completed its first sixteen months of operation. The majority of calls were requests for concrete information from individuals experiencing gambling-related problems, their spouses, other family members and their friends. Some were about Internet gambling. Many calls were received from helping professionals.

Callers primarily inquired about where they could receive problem gambling treatment across the province. The Helpline linked them to outpatient treatment programs, self-help groups and other treatment-related resources in their community.

Between November, 1997 and October, 1998, OPGH received 3,762 calls. Sixty-three percent of callers were male and thirty-five percent were female. Susan Vincent, Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline Executive Director, will provide more details at the CFCG conference.

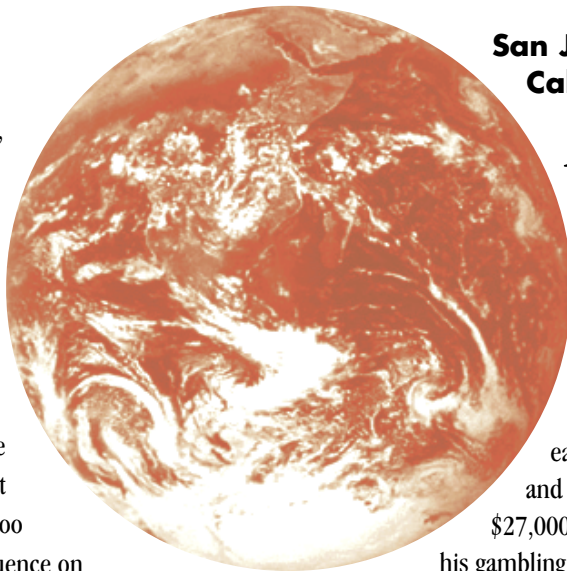
Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline
1-888-230-3505 (24 hrs)

AROUND THE WORLD

Certified Gambling Counsellors

Las Vegas, Nevada

Earlier this year, Las Vegas Mayor Jan Jones suggested that the City scale back on its slot machines and bar them from future convenience stores. She felt that they had become too corrupting an influence on children. She now admits she underestimated the response from the city's residents. The compromise: slots will remain, but in separate alcoves.



San Jose, California

An ex-cop, now in jail for burglary, and charged with numerous thefts, allegedly to support his gambling addiction, was granted early retirement and awarded a \$27,000 pension because his gambling addiction has left him "disabled". According to the Police and Fire Retirement Board, the medical evidence was there to support the fact that he was disabled.

A working committee, initiated by the CFCG, composed of individuals interested in the criteria for certification of gambling counsellors has met over the last eight months.

The Committee has reviewed various certification processes and anticipates producing a completed package of standards and criteria for certification by the spring.

Committee Chair, Jim Milligan, will be presenting the completed package at the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling's Ottawa conference in April 1999. For information call Nicholas Rupcich (519) 254-2112.

The Future Arrives Early

The Land of the Internet

Legal gambling in almost all jurisdictions is coupled with tough regulations and enforcement. This is especially true in North America.

In the land of the Internet however, regulation and enforcement are much more difficult. So, when it comes to online gambling, it is not clear how governments can limit access to gambling sites to those who can legally enter gambling venues.

According to an article in Knight Ridder Newspapers, internet gambling will generate an estimated \$650M revenues this year and over \$2B by 2001. Experts believe there are now over 250 on-line casinos as well as betting on everything from the Simpson trial to football games in progress.

Some places like St. Kitts and Antigua in the

Caribbean have licensed local operators to establish websites there. Anyone with access to the internet can get to these sites. While internet gambling is illegal in Canada, the U.S. and many other countries, lawmakers in each country have taken different approaches in dealing with the issue.

Senator Jon Kyle (Rep. Ariz.) introduced a bill that would ban Internet gambling. Some countries, however, like Australia, Germany and Antigua have already legalized various forms of online betting. Others will undoubtedly follow soon.

In Canada, Dennis Mills, Liberal MP for Greenwood, has introduced a Bill that would legalize it. Internet gambling would fall under Federal jurisdiction and profits would go to fund amateur sports. The Globe and Mail quoted Mills saying that, "We have to become globally competitive so we don't lose out".

Mills admits that his Bill has a long way to go before its acceptance.

Right now gambling falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces. They would surely oppose any threat to their estimated yearly profit of about \$200 million from sports lotteries.

But while the debates continue over internet gambling, technology marches on. It seems to have overcome some of the traditional concerns about the security of Internet financial transactions.

Internet gambling may be one of the biggest threats to problem gambling prevention programs. Easy access and convenience will be very tempting to those struggling with gambling problems. It seems likely that it will be necessary to fight fire with fire. In this case that means fighting technology with technology. Is anyone working on home-based self-exclusion software?

Ontario Impact Studies

Robert Hann and Associates, Limited, was selected to do the social and economic impacts studies of the four new charity casinos. The sites are in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Point Edward and Brantford.

Not limited on the numbers and types of social and economic impacts to study, they began last November seeking the views of local, regional and provincial stakeholders regarding priorities.

They will take a detailed five-year "snapshot"

of each community prior to the casino opening, and then follow up during the first and second years of each casino opening.

The "Pre-Casino Opening Phase" will last until the end of March, 1999. The "Post-Casino Opening Phase" will last for two years following the opening date of each casino and then less intensively for 5 years after that. Interim reports will be made available.

Extensive opportunities exist for consultation and view sharing. They will include public forums, focus groups, personal interviews,

workshops and others tailored to each location. Local members of the evaluation team have identified and already met with key community members, stakeholders and interested groups. They are developing a process and protocol for working together, as well as for consultation, data gathering, reporting, and other important process issues. Telephone surveys of local residents begin during the Spring of 1999.

For information contact:
Project Manager, Joan Nuffield,
by e-mail: JoanNuffield@compuserve.com

Derevensky Interview

Continued from page 1

maintain this behaviour. Other consequences are represented by growing social problems with serious psychological, sociological and economic implications.

CFCG: Is it easy to spot kids with gambling problems early on?

Derevensky: It is not easy at all. Given that there are frequently few observable signs of gambling dependence among adolescents, and the paucity of research in the area, it is not surprising that such problems have gone relatively unnoticed compared to other forms of addiction.

CFCG: You said that for most parents and teens, gambling is viewed as an innocuous behaviour with few negative consequences. How is this different from, say, substance or alcohol abuse?

Derevensky: Today, children and adolescents are informed via their school system about the dangers inherent in smoking, alcohol

and drug consumption. Few, however, are informed as to the addictive qualities potentially inherent in gambling activities. Adolescents only become cognizant of this after either they or their friends develop problematic gambling behaviours. I believe that it is this lack of public awareness that is contributing to the increasing number of children and adolescents who are currently struggling with gambling problems.

CFCG: Does your research suggest any solutions?

Derevensky: There remains little doubt that as professionals we need to change our focus from the "treatment of the dysfunctional or disease model" to a prevention model aimed at an at-risk population. With Dr. Robert Ladouceur and his research team at Universite Laval, we are developing a prevention model built upon the following premises: 1) the need for awareness; 2) the appropriateness of the school system to implement the prevention; 3) the teaching of successful coping and adaptive skills that would prevent

the development of problematic gambling; and 4) the identification, assessment and referral of students whose gambling behaviour is indicative of their being at-risk.

CFCG: You feel strongly that we as a society have a duty to protect our youth. Is not a mixed message being sent to kids when governments promote gambling and parents increasingly participate in gambling activities?

Derevensky: Government is ignoring, if not promoting, a new generation of problem gamblers. Despite the fact that many governments have outlawed the sale of lottery tickets to minors and have strict laws prohibiting them from gambling, enforcement of these laws (with the exception of casinos), is weak at best. Political leaders should commit to promoting and enforcing legislation prohibiting minors from purchasing lottery tickets or illegal gambling. Additional resources for research and prevention programs for youth gambling problems must be made available.

CFCG: Thank you.

CFCG - 15 Years of Commitment

Many of the new practitioners in the field, allied professionals and others have asked about the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling, its history and activities. What follows is a brief synopsis of CFCG past and present.

The Founding Executive Director Tibor Barsony and a small number of members of Gamblers Anonymous established the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling (Ontario) in 1983. This group believed that compulsive gambling was an addiction and that the social and health programs should be helping compulsive gamblers and their families.

This small group worked for many years to get the issues of problem and compulsive gambling on the public agenda. With the help of community leaders like Bishop Arthur Brown and the Honourable Paul Hellyer, they gradually expanded the Board to include more community and business representatives. Though the Foundation had a very limited budget, it had an active history of prevention/awareness, counselling, and promoting progressive public policy. It also initiated research including Ontario's first prevalence studies for adults and teens. During the early years it forged strong and

long-standing relationships with a range of other community groups and the U.S. National Council on Problem Gambling.

The Foundation invested a great deal of energy in persuading government, the media and the public to acknowledge problem and compulsive gambling. They worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the need for a safety net to protect those who became addicted to gambling.



Many jurisdictions realize the financial benefits of gaming with little regard for the social costs. The Foundation has played a fundamental role in persuading the Ontario government to commit resources to treatment and prevention of problem gambling.

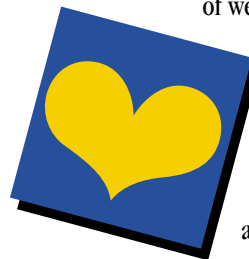
The Foundation was the first, and for many years the only, organization providing counselling and referral for the compulsive gambler and the family. Tibor Barsony and Nick Rupcich, Windsor Director, together with treatment staff have helped thousands of problem gamblers and their families.

In recent years the Foundation has further broadened its Board and staff. The Board (26 members) now includes recovering compulsive gamblers/family members, health care professionals, business leaders,

other community volunteers and two gaming industry representatives. The Board of Directors approved a new vision, mission and strategic directions in 1998. The vision is clear: healthy individuals, families and communities that are free of the personal, social and economic harm resulting from gambling abuse.

The Foundation believes that the gaming industry has a special role in reducing gambling problems. Gambling providers can be a first line resource in identifying and assisting the gambler who is in trouble. CFCG staff work with industry staff to build understanding of problem and compulsive gambling and to create effective responsible gambling programs.

In recent years CFCG has sponsored a number of well-attended conferences. These events provide opportunities for treatment professionals, health care specialists, gambling providers, cultural groups and others to share ideas and rub shoulders with the experts from around the world.



Today the Foundation is committed to working with all other organizations in building expertise among professionals, enhancing the Ontario treatment network and building a world leading problem gambling service system.

Government Gambling Growth

In 1997, according to Stats Canada, Canadians wagered \$6.8 billion on government-run gambling - 2.5 times the \$2.7 billion in 1992 - 59% of which was in casinos and on VLT's.

Profit to government more than doubled

during this period from \$1.7 billion to \$3.8 billion. Profits increased in every province and territory. By 1997, half of all provinces had reached at least 3% of total government revenue, and two, Alberta and Manitoba, had surpassed 4%. Ontario reported the highest profits from gambling among the

provinces, making over \$1.2 billion.

Eight out of ten households shelled out money for gambling, spending an average of \$423. Where the households played bingo however, (12%), the average spending was \$677.

Ottawa Conference

Bilingual Conference - Ottawa April 22-24, 1999.

The Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling (O) will be hosting the first bilingual Conference on Problem Gambling in Ottawa, Ontario, April 22-24 1999.

The conference topic is "Community and Treatment - Sharing Responsibility".

Highlights of the conference will be presentations by Alex Blaszczynski, noted Australian Researcher on Gambling, a plenary, "Community Gaming - Community Issues" with the Mayors of Brampton, Sault Ste. Marie and senior planner of Kitchener Ontario, Daniel Dubeau of Loto-Quebec and Christopher Anderson of Illinois USA.

These sessions will be simultaneously translated and there will be both English and French concurrent sessions. For more information please contact - Kathleen Raic Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling (416)499-980

Well, is there an increase?

Dr. Ron Frisch, Director of the Problem Gambling Research Group, University of Windsor, is about to release the results of their important four year research in that City. This is the third study done by the Group since 1993, the year before the casino opened.

The first, done before the casino opened, set the baseline. The second, completed one year after the opening, showed no statistically significant difference in levels of problem and pathological gambling and only a statistically insignificant increase in pathological gamblers.

The casino has now been open for four years. Will this part of the study, completed last year, answer the critical question: "Has the incidence of problem gambling increased since the opening of Casino Windsor?"

An answer to this much anticipated question will be released shortly. Full details will be given at the CFCG conference. Be there!

Upcoming Events

April 23, 1999

MidAtlantic Regional Seminar on "Compulsive Gambling and Senior Citizens: A Growing Concern" at the Wyndham Garden Hotel, Wilmington, Delaware USA.

Contact: Ronald Karpin, Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey 1-609-599-3299

April 29, 1999

The 4th New England Conference on Compulsive Gambling, Marriott Hotel, Hartford, CT USA

Contact: Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling 1-888-789-7777 or ctnobet@aol.com

June 3-4 1999

The 13th National Conference on Problem Gambling, Westin Hotel, Renaissance Center, Detroit, Michigan

Contact: National Council on Problem Gambling 1-410-730-8008

The Windsor Office, Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling (Ontario) has relocated to:

2109 Ottawa Street, Suite 401,
Windsor, Ontario, Canada N8Y 1R8
Phone 519-254-2112
Fax 519-254-0093

Ottawa Conference Registration

Registration Form

(Please print clearly)

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Bus. Phone _____

Fax _____ e:mail _____

Occupation/Agency _____

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