



## **Responsible advertising for iGaming: Key Takeaways from our March 7 webinar**

April 4th doesn't just mark the launch of regulated iGaming across the province of Ontario — it also represents a unique opportunity for marketers and advertisers to prove they can work effectively with regulators to help the public play with confidence.

Following an [announcement](#) by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) in late January, private gaming operators will be able to offer games to users in the province next month, provided they are registered with AGCO and concluded an Operating Agreement with iGaming Ontario (iGO).

Of course, attracting an audience for online gambling and sports operators will require marketing and advertising, but only in a responsible way that adheres to guidelines that have been published on the [AGCO's website](#).

To help clarify expectations and assist operators in moving forward with their marketing efforts, [thinktv](#) and [IAB Canada](#) hosted a webinar that brought together leaders from the government and online gaming associations.

### **A risk and outcomes-based approach to regulation**

Jay Welbourn, Senior Manager, Technology and Compliance at AGCO, explained that the overriding theme that runs across the guidelines is for operators to ensure their advertising campaigns do not target vulnerable members of the public, such as minors and people who choose to exclude themselves from gambling activities. They should also not advertise in ways that have been found to cause excessive or harmful gambling.

Rather than a rules-based approach — which can become increasingly complex and inflexible — Welbourn said the AGCO is focused on describing the outcomes it wants the industry to achieve. "This allows for innovation and efficiencies," he said, adding that more prescriptive requirements could still be set.

Welbourn said the content of ads should be developed so that they don't appeal to minors and tell the truth. He admitted that this sounds like common sense, but it isn't always applied in practice.

"Some people have misconceptions about gambling — that if a game hasn't played for a long time, it may be due to hit a jackpot, or that the chances of winning increase the longer you play," he said. "These myths and superstitions get people in trouble, causing them to chase losses and lose more than they can afford."

Ads should also not promote excessive play or promotional offers that aren't attainable without investing big amounts. Similarly, operators should be mindful of how they market inducements, such as bonuses and credits, which may only be served directly to individuals who have already given their legal consent to receive such offers.

Ads must disclose all material conditions and limitations on the same page, Welbourn added. Offers should also not be described as risk-free if the public needs to use their own money or incur a loss to take advantage of them.

### **iGO's logo and responsible gaming expectations**

The arrival of regulated online gambling Ontario comes after the formation of AGCO subsidiary iGaming Ontario last July. David Smith, the organization's director of iGaming Strategy and Market Insights, said its "play with confidence" brand reflects its mission of ensuring the commercial success of online gambling while also adhering to responsible gaming standards.

For operators, this means that for the first six months of launching their services, the iGaming Ontario logo must be visible "above the fold" and in the footer on every website page after that. The logo must also be displayed in any paid visual media materials, including television, digital, social media, print and out of home.

Operators will also be expected to run marketing campaigns that focus on responsible gaming (RG).

"Simply adding an RG tagline to a promotional ad does not fulfill this requirement," he said. In the meantime, Smith suggested advertisers consider the media and proximity of their creative — for example, a gambling ad shouldn't appear next to an ad for credit loans. Ads will also need to be geotargeted to those in Ontario, and ads should be age-gated on social media services where it is possible to do so.

### **How thinktv is helping navigate a new area for advertisers**

This isn't an area where advertisers must figure out everything on their own. For example, [thinktv's clearance operation](#) has a long history of ensuring ads are truthful and meet industry broadcast standards, thinktv president Catherine MacLeod explained.

"We want to get ads in the system, and we want to help advertisers and agencies to work with our analysts to navigate this space," she said. "There's lots of new information here. Just as we

have in the past, we will engage and ensure that they have the right information as quickly as possible. We can red-flag where you might run into trouble.”

This could be as simple as bringing think**tv** a storyboard or even an idea, MacLeod said, explaining that the clearance operation is not a legal review but a way to ensure ads meet the requirements of the Broadcast Codes, as well as government policies and guidelines.

[Canadian Gaming Association](#) CEO Paul Burns said operators want a healthy marketplace and are prepared to do what it takes to continue that as online gaming is regulated in Ontario.

"Many operators have seen the impacts of sudden and significant policy shifts," he said. "We want to have an ongoing dialogue as we go forward."

Welbourn suggested that's exactly what the AGCO wants too.

"A demonstrated commitment to compliance out of the gate goes a long way in shaping our approach with you for the months ahead," he said.

***Watch the complete [webinar](#) on demand for more details about the guidelines and an in-depth Q&A with our panellists.***

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