CHAIRMAN JAMES: Mr. Ladouceur.

MR. LADOUCEUR: Within the next 15 minutes I will make a comprehensive summary of dozens and dozens of research that we've conducted over the nearly 20 years at Laval University on the psychology of gambling. In order to achieve that, I will share with you our understanding of gambling behavior, underlining two main points: why do people gamble, and illustrate the core misbelief of different gamblers. We will then apply those data to the out-treatment of pathological gamblers, and I will try to answer those two questions: are effective treatments available, and if so, are they efficient. I'll then discuss the prevention program and make some concluding remarks.

Gambling is an activity based on chance, but very rarely do we define what we mean by chance. Well, if we look in the dictionary, chance is defined as a unpredictable event or accidental happening; or random, a brother of chance, is defined as the method where the selection of samples have an equal probability of selection. So let's state the definition that chance is the impossibility of controlling outcomes of an event.

Why do people gamble? Well, all surveys will underline two main reasons. The first one is entertainment, fun, pleasure, excitement -- some would say to avoid some conflicts. The second reason is to win money, and in survey, that would be the first reason. I will strongly argue that winning money is the prerequisite, the single one condition for entertainment, and I think we should not undermine this point where winning money is the most important thing.
But we have a paradox, and the paradox is in all games the expected return of money invested from the gambler is always negative. So why is gambling so popular? You know as much as I do. And why some gamblers, a minority, won't become pathological gamblers. Well, if I were that paradox, we can say that in attempting to gain wealth, people engage in an activity which is expected to decrease wealth on the long-term basis.

So why is that? What is the main reason? Well, the main reason is while most of us -- and I would say if not all -- while we gamble, we mis-perceive the notion of chance and randoms.

Why is that? Well, there are many factors that contribute to mask these notions. The first one is the active role played by the individual who gambles. If I gamble and I'm active at it, it means that I can control the game.

Perceived competition: if I'm competing with someone, the outcome should not be based on chance, beat the dealer.

Frequency of gambling: the more I do an activity, the better I should be at it. If I play golf, I at least have the illusion of being better the more I play.

Complexity of the game: the more complex a game is, the more there's something to understanding that game; that's like a craps game.

Well, let me illustrate this by a few examples. Research has shown that an individual who picked their own tickets in the lottery would value that ticket much more than if
someone else picked the ticket, and the ratio would be from four
to five more times if you're more active in the process.

A study that was conducted recently showed that if
you play roulette and give the opportunity to the player to throw
the ball, the person who is more active will bet significantly
more money because they have the impression that they are active
and can control the outcome of the game.

At dice tables, people who need a high number, the
dice will be thrown strongly; if a low number is wanted, the dice
will be thrown softly. We've all played the ladder and the snake
game. If you need a one to play, you will throw your dice
softly, you will not shoot briskly. It seems that is kind of
intuitive. Why is that? When we play roulette, we will analyze
previous numbers and colors before placing our bet.

Why is that? Well, research has provided some very
important issues on that. We found that there's one common
denominator among players which is: while gambling, people try
to predict the outcome of the game. And I've defined that this
game is uncontrollable.

But how can people do that? And this is probably the
main core of misbelief. When we analyzed what people say to
themselves, we found that 80 percent of their perception of the
games are erroneous. That means they deny the notion of chance
or randomness. And within those perceptions we found one common
denominator: that people are making links between independent
events.

Why is that? Why are we doing that? Well, all our
life we were told to take past experience in order to better
perform in the future. Gambling is the only human experience where we should not do that. Nobody has ever told us that. If we apply now those results, those data to the treatment of pathological gamblers, if this misconception towards randomness is crucial, correcting this factor should help pathological gamblers.

Well, we've conducted a well controlled study where cognitive correction was the main component, paired with other different therapeutic ingredients. The methodology was pretty stringent. Results showed 85 percent success for the treated patients, and those who were in the control group, only 6 percent had any success -- that's what we call spontaneous remission.

Not only was that treatment effective but it was also efficient. The average total time for a patient was 16 hours. We now applied this cognitive treatment in a pilot study -- which I gave you a copy this morning that was just published two days ago -- and we had some similar results. We're now conducting a more controlled study funded by the National Council to evaluate that treatment and the preliminary results are quite good.

If I turn now to prevention, my strong belief is that gambling is a leisure activity. As any other activity, you must not gamble more than you can afford. But in order to conduct prevention, we need two basic principles: the content of the program must be relevant to gambling, and we must evaluate our program. That's what we've been doing and I think that will provide some very good outcomes.

Conclusion. We know now much more about the psychology of gambling than before. I think some good research
has provided some informative data. Effective treatments and efficient treatments for pathological gamblers are now available. I'm not saying that all treatment that has been delivered are necessarily effective, but some are very effective. This approach is now being applied to the prevention of pathological gambling and I think we must continue to do good research in this expanding area.

My final remark is gambling is a leisure activity as any other activity, and we must not gamble more than we can afford. And if we all worked in that perspective, I'm strongly convinced that we will all be winners. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.