

For Immediate Release

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PLAYING THE MACHINES

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VLTs and slots in Canada are bringing in more money than all the gambling combined in Vegas. And most of that money comes from a growing number of people who never dreamed they'd ever get hooked. Film Director Barbara Doran wants to add her VOICE to a CHORUS of people across the country who want to see VLTs banned.

TRAILER PARK BOYS actor John Dunsworth, has been campaigning against the damages of VLT's for years through *Game Over VLTS*, *"Like all addictions, gambling has a price and it's not just money. There are 300 people a year, according to the Canada Safety Council, that take their own lives because of problem gambling."*

"There's a pejorative taint to being addicted to gambling, that you're a weak person. I'm not saying that every single person can be entrapped by the machines. But there's a significant enough percentage so that the machines should be declared dangerous. Dangerous to public health." (John Dunsworth)

Filmmaker Barbara Doran is the writer/director of this compelling documentary, **PLAYING THE MACHINES**. She takes us from VEGAS to SOUTH CAROLINA, the bars in HALIFAX and ST. JOHN'S. We meet the FATHER OF SUSAN PIERCEY, from CORNER BROOK, NL a young woman who started gambling at 18 and when she stopped she had spent over \$100,000.

KEITH PIERCEY, Susan's father, tells one of those stories; 4 years ago, his beautiful, successful 31 year-old daughter Susan committed suicide. An honours student, she became hopelessly addicted to the machines. In her journal Susan wrote, *"I sold my soul to play your game, you never judged me, ever ready to accept my money.... You've hurt me more than anything or anyone in my life."*

SHERRY RHYNO of Bedford, N.S., said her late husband Garnet *"was a devoted husband and father who loved life, and like many others with VLT addictions, he started with innocently dropping some quarters in a corner store machine, not realizing it would take his life."*
"We ended up re-mortgaging. Several times. We lost a lot of money. I would say easy two-hundred and fifty, three hundred thousand dollars. It was affecting every aspect of our life. Every aspect of our life."

- VLT's and slots HAVE MUSHROOMED INTO A 13 billion dollar industry in Canada.
- Alberta boasts that its people have more "gaming" entertainment choices than any other province. And that province takes in more money from gambling than revenue from the oil sands.

**Tracy Schrans, President and Principal of Focal Research and
Board of Directors, NS Gaming Foundation;**

- *"The best way I can explain it is; Lotto 649 has a draw once a week that costs a \$1 a ticket. And so if you covered every single draw you would be spending fifty-two dollars a year. But if you took Lotto 649 and you made it a draw every minute, that would be sixty dollars an hour. And so what we used to spend in a year playing Lotto 649, we're now spending in a minute **of play on the machines.**"*

Ches Crosbie is leading a class action lawsuit in Newfoundland;

- *“The simplest way to put it is what you see is not what’s going on in the guts of the machine. What you’re seeing on the screen is misleading the player and deceiving the player are false assumptions and conclusions about their actual odds of winning and what’s being determined in the background is something completely other. So that’s the fundamental deception in VLTs.”*
- Game Over VLTS, a group dedicated to banning the machines in Nova Scotia want governments to follow the lead of South Carolina. In 1999, South Carolina, with 36,000 video poker machines - one for every 100 residents - was the most “pokieaddicted” state in the USA.

Lawyer Richard Gergel won the battle in South Carolina;

- *“And all I can say is that we resolved to do better for ourselves. And we did. And video poker ended in South Carolina at midnight on June thirty, two thousand.”*

Playing The Machines is a story about people who have become addicted to playing VLT machines and Governments that have become as dependent on the money as the people are addicted to playing the machines.

PLAYING THE MACHINES

Writer/ Director: Barbara Doran

Producer: Rob Blackie

Morag Loves Company

Narration: Gordon Pinsent

THE LENS on CBC Newsworld

Tuesday March 24th at 10pmET, 11:30pmNL

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