

# Televised poker filled hockey void: Mac prof

**BY PETER VAN HARTEN**

Blame it on the 2004-05 National Hockey League lockout.

McMaster University marketing guru Marvin Ryder says cable networks were left scrambling for winter sporting events and filled broadcast time with televised poker. Televised poker drew up to three times the audience of the NHL and established tournament, casino, online and home poker as a North American “phenomenon,” says Ryder.

“The trick was showing everybody’s hand and each hand becomes a mini drama,” he said.

The phenomenon has spread. Hamilton Mountain Bowl on Stone Church Road East has had a big win staging poker tournaments.

Televised poker has probably reached its saturation point now, he said, but the World Series of Poker this past year drew 37,000 applicants willing to pay \$10,000 US each to play.

The first online poker site began in 1998. This year it is expected to surpass \$1 billion US and online gambling represents about 2 per cent of all gambling spending, including lotteries, casinos and other pursuits, said Ryder.

Governments seeing money flowing away from their regulated gambling sources are starting to clamp down.

## Show your hand

- 37 per cent of young adults 18-34 play poker for money.
- About 50 per cent say they are playing more than they did two years ago and more frequently.
- 24 per cent play once a week or more often.
- 16 per cent believe poker is a good way to earn extra money
- 67 per cent of Ontarians believe that playing poker in casinos or bars is a problem.

— *From a Poker poll by Ipsos-Reid of 1,003 Ontario respondents over 18 for the Responsible Gambling Council.*

And because of the addictive appeal of poker, especially online poker, to young people, the government-funded Responsible Gambling Council is warning about the dangers.

Most people who gamble for entertainment spend about 1 per cent to 2 per cent of their annual income on gambling. Spending more should be a cause for concern, says the council.

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