

Keno game over... for now

STANLEY TROMP

Contributing writer

If you played the B.C. Lottery Corporation's Keno free "second-chance" contest last fall, you might fairly wonder if you got the prize you were entitled to.

That's because a report from BCLC found that some lotto retailers failed to submit a winners list for the grand prize draw, or submitted it past the deadline. These factors would cause a potential winner to be wrongly disqualified.

The internal audit of March 2013 was obtained by *Courier* under the freedom of information law. These findings were called "high risk," which means an issue that "should be addressed and resolved immediately."

This audit was of a free "second chance" Keno contest and not of the main game of Keno. The second chance contest was held once from Oct. 29 to Dec. 9, 2012, but BCLC has not run a major second one since the audit. The contest, which was also known as The Keno No More "No Bonus" (KNMNB), has been suspended until BCLC completes a "deep-dive review of the contesting process"

BCLC warned that "these occurrences could result in the player's disqualification if drawn for the grand prize, and negatively impact public perception on the fairness and integrity of BCLC's Lottery contests."

"We take the audit findings very seriously," said BCLC spokesperson Laura Piva-Babcock. "As soon as the audit report was

presented, the lottery division acted immediately to address the report's recommendations and findings in order to establish an improved process. We initiated and are continuing an in-depth review of the second-chance draw and contest procedures."

One of the solutions BCLC is considering is to change players' entry for second chance contests from retail locations to online, which would give them direct access to entering contest draws.

The auditor found that some retailers failed to submit a winners list for the grand prize draw, or provide evidence that the draw was conducted at their location, although the \$50 Keno Free Play Coupon prize was awarded. As well, other retailers drew unqualified winners (e.g. non-Keno Bonus tickets were entered) which may have resulted in mistakenly awarding the \$50 Keno Free Play Coupon prize.

Keno players wrote their name and contact information on their non-winning tickets and placed them in a draw box at retail outlets for a free chance to win a pack of Keno Bonus Free Play Coupons worth \$50. The winners of that prize won an entry into the grand prize draw for a \$25,000 prize and six \$5,000 prizes. Grand prize winners were drawn by BCLC and announced on bcl.com. For the \$50 prizes, 1,150 retail locations participated, with one \$50 prize per location.

For the main Keno game itself, BCLC says it took in \$235 million in revenue in 2011/12, and paid out more than \$150 million in prize money to winners the same year.