

# Taking no chances with the future

**Western Canada Lottery Corporation  
hits big savings and predictable  
revenue to help fund public programs**

All sorts of emotions come into play for lottery ticket holders. But the end game for the organization selling the tickets goes far beyond entertaining players and winners.

Western Canada Lottery Corporation (WCLC) operates as a fundraiser for local governments, which requires keeping a close eye on operating budgets. That's why WCLC adopted a consumption-based platform approach to drive costs down and give more money back to fund public programs that benefit local populations.

"It's why we exist," says Michelle Valentine, solution architect at WCLC. The non-profit organization operates lottery and gaming activities on behalf of the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, as well as the Yukon, Nunavut, and Northwest Territories.

"That's what's really important," she remarks. "It's about supporting our provinces and territories so they can run those priority services and programs."

## The name of the game

With the mission to deliver better revenue back to governments, efficient budget planning is critical for WCLC, and resource assignment requires careful consideration, implementation, and reporting. "We're a lean organization. Our goal is to have low operational costs to give more money back to our territories and provinces," says Valentine.

"We want our systems to support the business," she explains, "So, we must be very strategic to define where we want to go and figure out the best way to move forward."



**Industry:** Sports and entertainment

**Region:** Canada

### Vision

Increase resource efficiency and maintain reliability and integrity throughout the gaming system

### Strategy

Shift to a cloud experience and operating model to standardize and consolidate IT environment

### Outcomes

- Increases funding predictability for public programs
- Supports over 400% online demand growth and speeds turnaround with 3x performance
- Enables players to engage where and how they choose while protecting private data and operations

## New ways to play

Although the lottery business is traditionally retail-based, WCLC keeps enhancing and expanding the ways it interacts and engages with players at the edge, allowing it to attract new markets and keep up with player demands.

“We’re looking to enable our users to play wherever they want,” Valentine shares. This trend was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic when buying lottery tickets at retail locations wasn’t possible across varying periods, regions, and restrictions. “People are now used to that flexibility. They want to have options. We’re constantly rolling out more features for end players to have that digital experience and be able to do things on mobile they couldn’t before.”

The organization adapted by enabling curbside pickup for lottery tickets, adding more features to its Lotto Spot! mobile app, and launching Subscription Spot, a new online subscription platform, which allows players to sign up for ongoing draws and get direct payment if they win. “When we went live with Subscription Spot, the number of people signing up doubled within a week, and then it kept on doubling,”

she recalls. “Seeing those sales records was exciting, but also knowing we had the capacity to sustain the growth was such a great feeling.”

Still, as the industry keeps evolving, core principles remain. Valentine adds: “One thing we have never changed, is our focus on the reliability and integrity of the lottery system.” With thousands of players and millions in sales and prizes, there’s no room for downtime or errors.

## Behind the draw

Reliable infrastructure is crucial to maintaining reliable gaming operations. “We need a very secure and stable back end, all the way up to our app,” explains Valentine.

But WCLC’s IT stack was not entirely up to the challenge as it neared the end of life. “We were very good at acquiring infrastructure, but not so great at lifecycle management. Parts of our environment were off support, or nearly there,” she recalls.

As business needs grew, so did a siloed environment. “We had racks outside of offices, many data centers, and buildings because each team had their own unique hardware requirements,” she adds.

## Shifting the model, shifting minds

After evaluating the state of its infrastructure, WCLC recognized the need to make changes and partnered with HPE to find a solution. What started as an IT overhaul became an end-to-end transformation, well beyond the data center. “It actually shifted our mindset,” says Valentine.

The shift was enabled by the HPE GreenLake edge-to-cloud platform, which accelerates and simplifies the way WCLC plans, builds, and expands to support its business. The solution delivers a cloud experience model for WCLC’s workloads, fully managed and deployed on-premises.

To make this choice, Valentine worked with the finance department to project and compare the costs of a traditional buy model against a fully managed self-service model. After mapping and analyzing business requirements for the next 5 years, “the savings were easy to see,” she recalls. “Our finance department is happy. We’re no longer coming to them randomly and asking for X amount to make a project happen. We have a predictable monthly cost.”



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– **Michelle Valentine**, Solution Architect, Western Canada Lottery Corporation



## A proven track record

WCLC first adopted the HPE GreenLake platform for its non-gaming environment, which supports internal operations. After over a year of running back-end workloads as a service, it chose to extend this model for its gaming side. “We have such a proven track record with HPE GreenLake. When we went to the board with the plan, it wasn’t an issue,” Valentine relates.

The team assessed 5-year TCO once more, comparing three options: staying with a previous vendor, owning and managing infrastructure, or expanding its HPE GreenLake platform. “The game changer for us was having HPE Pointnext Complete Care. No other option could meet those timelines and SLAs,” explains Valentine. The HPE Pointnext Complete Care holistic environment optimization service is part of all HPE GreenLake contracts. “We’re getting proactive support and not being reactive anymore. Especially for the gaming side, that’s the best thing we can do.”

## Winning speed and scale

Valentine found big value in consolidating on a standardized and scalable environment. “As soon as I see the digital strategy plan coming from



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– **Michelle Valentine**, Solution Architect, Western Canada Lottery Corporation

marketing, I start planning what that means for my team. As an architect, I always look at the whole picture,” she says. “Going right down to our hardware components, I know we can respond to any requirements, both to support internal areas and our members’ strategies.”

Faster provisioning through the HPE GreenLake platform translates to enhanced customer experiences. “When a team comes to us with a project, they no longer have to wait six months to get the resources they need. In the end, players benefit from this faster turnaround time,” Valentine relates.

She now follows a simpler process to plan and provision capacity: “If we need additional compute or storage, we have it ready. As soon as demand comes, we burst into it and we’re good to go.” This model supports growing options for players. “We recently extended our sports section. Now, you can bet on almost anything that’s available. There’s been a very good uptake, with a seamless experience to support it.”

Application performance is also faster. “I was quite happy with HPE Synergy. On our QA side for a game, reports went from running in 6 hours to 2 hours,” recalls Valentine. “When you have over 50 reports to run daily,

it really adds up to business value.” HPE Synergy also allows different configurations to fit the specific memory and compute requirements of each workload, enhancing resource efficiency.

## A lab for jackpot ideas

As she found several teams needed a lab, Michelle posed a question: “Can we have one lab environment where we all work together?” That environment now runs under the HPE GreenLake platform and allows developers to do testing without disrupting production.

The floor is now open for innovation, both for internal business applications as well as new features for players. “When developers come with a cool business idea, we can definitely support them,” Valentine says.

She describes one of the features added: “We added a mobile ticket checker function. Now, anybody can scan their ticket at home to see if they won.” This function is also providing insights into user behavior. “We’re watching our network traffic to see how many people use our app. There’s always a spike right after that large jackpot. And also in the mornings, some people check their tickets first thing when they get up.”



## One lucky team

“This model has brought our teams closer together. We’re a lot more collaborative,” Valentine states. “We now have all of our systems centralized, instead of multiple different groups managing. It’s just a much cleaner experience for everyone.”

WCLC’s technical teams have also been able to use a new tool to gain more insight into the environment—HPE InfoSight, an AI platform that manages infrastructure performance and helps prevent issues across WCLC’s infrastructure stack. Valentine describes the benefits: “We used to have a dark site; now, we have full visibility on how the hardware is performing. Predicting and preventing any issues traces back to our mission to keep our systems reliable.”

“Now, we let everybody focus on what they enjoy doing. And if you enjoy your job, you do it a lot better. It really helped the dynamics of the team,” she continues. “That comes with no longer doing just traditional IT but getting an end-to-end service from a trusted vendor and partner.”



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– Michelle Valentine, Solution Architect, Western Canada Lottery Corporation

## Not gambling on protection

WCLC reinforced the continuity of its players’ expectations. “The gaming system is always running,” says Valentine. “We put redundancy in place, we have the support and asset management, so we feel a lot better knowing we’re solid. That’s huge for us.”

Valentine underscores the value of building a secure environment. “We have game data and player information that we want to keep on-premises. So, we architected the whole infrastructure as a private cloud, and we did it with help.”

The team deployed HPE Primera for its gaming environment. “The 100% uptime guarantee is very valuable when you have a game side running,” Valentine says. “There’s not day-to-day management, which I think is everybody’s favorite thing. And we’ve gained great performance out of it.” It also transitioned its non-game workloads to HPE Alletra. The HPE GreenLake platform allows the company to evolve and adopt new technologies as they become available.

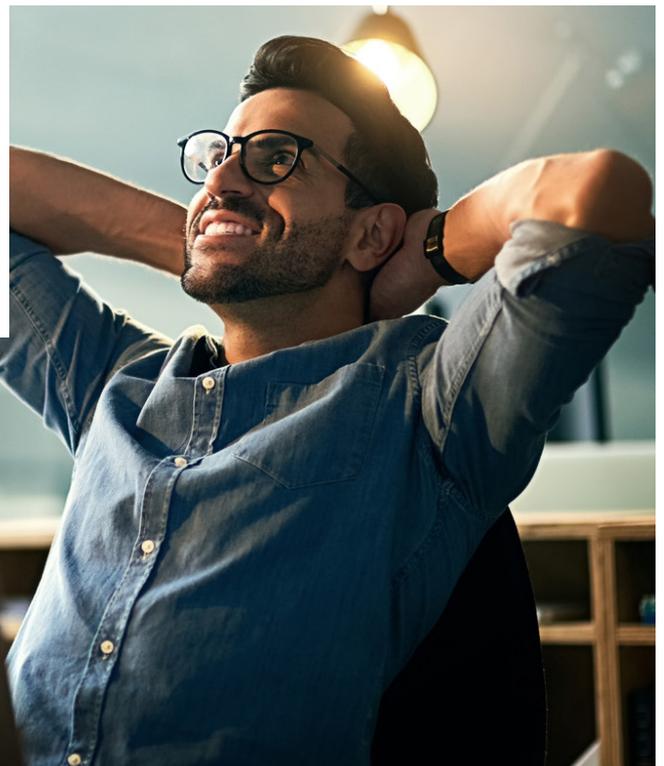
“It’s the ease of mind” she continues. “The entire organization knows IT has the necessary securities, control, and management in place.”

## The joy of giving back

Despite restrictions and lockdown periods, lottery demand keeps growing. “We have wonderful players that are very engaged. The games are also a nice diversion from dark days during the pandemic. There are still jackpots out there to be won,” shares Valentine.

In the end, the HPE GreenLake platform is supporting WCLC’s mission. Valentine explains: “Finance is now able to do more stable forecasting. We’re giving more predictable return back to the provinces, so they get the money they are expecting.”

From awarding prizes to lottery winners to helping fund programs that benefit the entire region, WCLC is changing lives. “I work for an organization that is here to do good. And it feels good,” she concludes.





## **Solution**

### **HPE GreenLake platform**

- HPE GreenLake for storage
- HPE GreenLake for compute

### **Services**

- HPE Pointnext Complete Care

### **Hardware**

- HPE Alletra
- HPE Primera
- HPE Synergy
- HPE SimpliVity

### **Software**

- HPE InfoSight

### **Key partners**

- Powerland

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