

Atlantic City gaming revenue up 25% in March

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ATLANTIC CITY — Casino gaming revenue was up more than 25% in March, marking the 10th straight month of growth for the industry.

According to figures released Friday by the state Division of Gaming Enforcement, total gaming revenue last month was \$273.7 million, a 25.3% increase from March 2018.

Casino gaming revenue has increased by double digits every month since the opening of Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City and Ocean Casino Resort in June 2018.

The increase in gaming revenue is in contrast to quarterly reports released Monday that showed a 15.4% decline in gross operating profits, which reflect earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and other charges. Gross operating profit is a widely accepted measure of profitability in the Atlantic City casino industry.

James Plousis, chairman of the state Casino Control Commission, said the lower quarterly report profit numbers take into account the money casinos have spent to attract more business.

“Earlier this week, the casinos reported tighter profit margins in 2018, but we are seeing results from the investments they’ve made,” said Plousis. “The regional economy is benefiting, and the industry is hiring. More than 2,000 jobs are open, including about 700 full-time positions.”

Through the first three months of 2019, total gaming revenue is up 22.2% compared to last year, when only seven casinos were operational. The resort’s nine casinos have reported total gaming revenue of \$726.65 million this year.

“March numbers clearly indicate strength in the gaming market,” said Rummy Pandit, executive director of the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality & Tourism. “Even without considering revenue from the two new properties, gaming revenue is up for the month by over 5% and year-to-date by more than 3%. This is a complete turnaround from last year, when March was down 1.5% and the quarter was down 5.9%.”

The addition of legalized sports betting has also increased gaming revenue for Atlantic City’s nine casinos. In March, the casinos and their online and mobile partners reported \$11.4 million in revenue.

Since its introduction in June, sports bettors have wagered more than \$2 billion statewide.

“Two billion dollars in bets in nine months shows just how much pent-up demand for legal sports betting existed in New Jersey,” said Dustin Gouker, lead sports betting analyst for PlayNJ.com. “As quickly as the industry has ramped up, though, the next milestone should come more quickly. Three billion dollars is certainly within reach by the industry’s first anniversary in June.”

Online gaming accounted for \$39.1 million in March, an increase of 53% compared to the same month last year.

“Online sports betting is clearly driving online casino growth,” said Steve Ruddock, lead online gambling analyst for PlayNJ.com. “March has become a predictable spark for New Jersey’s online gambling industry and a first-half indicator for what gains the industry will make in the second half of the year. That pattern should continue this year.”

Golden Nugget Atlantic City and its online partners continue to lead the industry in internet gaming, reporting monthly revenue of more than \$14.2 million in March.

Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa reported total gaming revenue in March of \$65.7 million, more than double the next-closest property.

Bally’s Atlantic City, Harrah’s Resort Atlantic City and Tropicana Atlantic City all reported decreases in total gaming revenue in March compared to last year. Harrah’s reported the largest monthly (16.1%) and yearly (13.5%) decreases in total gaming revenue.