

HANSARD – March 17, 2014

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. Premier, last week, a group of Ontario standardbred horse breeders filed a statement of claim against OLG and the province. The lawsuit states that the cancellation of SARP was made with no prior consultations or offer of compensation. It's true, and it's what we've been saying all along. Your government's conduct towards the industry is inexcusable. The NDP's indifference, by allowing the 2012 budget to pass, is inexcusable. I ask the Premier, why should it take a lawsuit to force you and the NDP to pay attention?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I cannot speak to an ongoing legal situation, and I won't do that, but I can say to the member opposite that my record on the horse racing industry is very, very successful. The Alliance circuit—and this is eight tracks. Woodbine, Mohawk, Flamboro Downs, Georgian Downs, Western Fair, Clinton, Hanover, Grand River all have funding plans. They all have a strategy in place and a funding plan in place. Fort Erie has a funding plan. Rideau Carleton—there is conversation ongoing. Ajax has a funding plan, and Sudbury, Kawartha, Dresden, Hiawatha and Leamington are still in negotiation. We are very pleased at the progress that we've made. I've made it clear that the integration of horse racing with the gaming industry is what needs to happen. That is under way, Mr. Speaker, and those tracks will have a 2014 season. That's a success.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Well, Speaker, I've spoken to leaders in the industry, and they tell me the Premier's spin is completely at odds with reality. It's not up to the courts to sort this out; it's up to you, because you and the NDP made the mess. You need to clean it up. We have called for an immediate and permanent end to your so-called modernization plan that would build 29 new casinos while putting even more of the horse racing industry out of business. We would also re-establish a workable, transparent and affordable Slots at Racetracks Program. Why won't you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The opposition is advocating for a return to a program that was not transparent, that was not working, and I think he knows perfectly well that John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson worked to put together a plan that would be transparent, that would focus on the industry and would allow for the integration of gaming and the horse racing industry. So as I said, the eight tracks in the Alliance circuit all have a plan for going forward.

We're still in negotiation with some of the other tracks, but I'm very confident that the \$400 million over the next five years that we are investing in horse racing is going to allow the horse racing industry in Ontario to thrive and will not, as the opposition would suggest, return us to a non-transparent and unaccountable plan.