

Silence is Not An Option

By Dianne Graham

If silence is an opinion it is one that Ontario's horse industry cannot afford to have. The OEF tackles issues daily regarding the welfare of the horse, the industry, program development and taxation. All are imperative to the continued success of the horse industry in this province. Racing is a pillar of that success. The horse industry is not unlike other industries; it is reliant on a multitude of conditions and elements that contribute to each faction; therefore, creating a strong overall future.

The horse industry is all connected. At times the connection is difficult to see and not always obvious, but it is unmistakable. There is the Standardbred trainer who has children in the show ring, or the Thoroughbred breeder who shows Hackneys, the staff at the racetrack who are avid barrel racers and weekend trail riders. Then there are professionals who supply products and services to the industry as a whole, and the list goes on...

As I drove through my community the other night I looked at all the small businesses that would be crippled if the current proposed government recommendations were adopted. This included the independent grocery store, the lunch café, the hair salon and the local gas bar. This does not even take into consideration the more direct economic beneficiaries such as feed mills, hay providers, blacksmiths, veterinarians, universities, equine research and the children's equine programs that are funded by the racing industry. Many will be greatly penalized by this proposed action.

The horse racing industry has perhaps failed in educating the public about its real contribution to the economic welfare of our communities and the importance of its success to the financial well-being of the province of Ontario. There is also little understanding by the public as to what goes on behind the scenes to create a performance animal. There is a tremendous amount of work that is involved to actually getting a horse to the races; winning teams do not just materialize.

Horsemen have for too long positioned themselves in silos citing and respecting only certain breeds, disciplines and industry. This action has not been one of our strengths. We have, and may continue to blame each other for what ails us. What is relevant is that good hardworking people participate in every equine component, and that people in each group take exceptional care of their animals. A good horseman is a good horseman. There are bad actors in each discipline and these people are not respected amongst their own peers. Our discipline prejudice has been perhaps our greatest failing as an industry and in the end has been detrimental to us all.

Ontario horses and professionals are some of the most successful in the world. Now is the time to recognize and celebrate our similarities and accomplishments as a group. We have so much together and much less divided. The goal of the OEF is to ensure that we have quality horsemanship in this province and a strong equine industry, regardless of discipline.

Is changing this culture a possibility? Most things that we accept as standard today were at one point considered impossible. It would be somewhat naive to expect that we could solve all our challenges in the immediate future, but to quote Walt Disney, "you must think beyond your lifetime if you want to accomplish something truly great". Perhaps the current political dispute will serve to unite the horse community enabling real political impact. Together, we can all endeavor to leave our industry healthier than we found it.



Submitted By: Woodbine Entertainment Group

Ontario Equestrian Federation Supports Horse Racing Industry



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The Ontario Equestrian Federation (OEF) is in complete support of horse racing in the Province of Ontario. Its continued stability is critical to the economic health of Ontario's entire horse industry.

Ontario racing supports 60,000 jobs, many of these positions being situated in rural settings where the possibility of obtaining similar employment would be unlikely. As with other sectors of the horse industry, these jobs provide a healthy living for thousands of tax contributing families, helping to create and support vibrant rural communities. These communities represent the historic "grass roots" foundations of this province.

The trickle down effect of any negative impact to the racing community is potentially incalculable. The racing industry cites a contribution of over \$2 billion to Ontario's economy each year through wages and salaries including those of veterinarians, farriers, farmers, bedding suppliers, feed mills, stable suppliers and tack suppliers. However, there are many whose income is not attributed to this estimate. Local businesses such as local restaurants, gas bars, barn builders, and trailer manufacturers will also experience an immense financial shock, not to mention the hit that the automotive sector will experience. Numerous university programs, including extensive and expensive equine research, benefiting and improving the health of horses throughout the world, are conducted using funds provided by racing organizations.

Many of the 21,000 OEF members are active participants in the racing community. There is tremendous crossover between traditional racing and equestrian sport. Increasingly, those who are involved in racing also own sport and recreational horses. The passion for the horse rarely stops at the racetrack. It is therefore a simplistic assumption that economic fall out from weakened racing would not become problematic to other industry sectors.

The horse breeding industry in Ontario for all disciplines, including racing, is the strongest in Canada, providing tremendous opportunities for education and employment. The continued stability and strength of Ontario's Thoroughbred, Standardbred and Quarter Horse breeding operations is reliant on a strong racing program. Of serious concern to the OEF is the welfare of many of these animals if racing was no longer viable. This could potentially create a delicate and critical horse welfare situation, which would be greatly alarming for everyone.

A healthy racing industry creates an environment of information, economic and professional cross-pollination, where expertise benefits all areas of the horse community. It would be extremely detrimental at all levels, if this were no longer the case.

Make Your Voices Heard – Write your Member of Parliament Today

The Ontario Horse Racing Industry (OHRIA) has engaged the services of a public relations firm, Broadview Strategy Group and will be calling on industry stakeholders and ally organizations to help with an intensive six week grass roots campaign which commenced the week of February 20th, 2012. The purpose of the campaign is to inform both the public and the Ontario Government of the economic impact of the horse racing industry in the province.

The campaign will include four Town Hall meetings scheduled to take place across the province in March commencing on March 8th at Flamboro, March 13th at Rideau Carlton, March 20th in London and March 27th at Woodbine Race Track.

“Our goal is to have as many fans and industry participants take part in these meetings.” says Sue Leslie, President and Chair of OHRIA.

“The aim is to maintain our mutually beneficial partnership with the Ontario Government in the Slots at Racetracks Program.”

In speaking with Sue Leslie, President and Chair of the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association (OHRIA) reminds all those who support the industry to write their local MPP’s, Premier Dalton McGuinty, Finance Minister Dwight Duncan, Paul Godfrey – Chair of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) as well as the leaders of the NDP Party of Ontario Andrea Horwath and Tim Hudak with their personal stories on how their lives and livelihood would be negatively impacted should the Ontario Government change the highly successful Slots at Racetrack Program agreement currently in place whereby the horse racing industry receives 20% of the revenue on slot machine.

The following is the most recent Fact Sheet published by OHRIA titled - A Partnership That Works.

In the late 1990’s and throughout the past decade, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) entered into a revenue sharing agreement with the horse racing industry and host municipalities in Ontario to allow the placement of slot machines at racetracks.

The racetracks provided the OLG with access to their existing facilities, saving the government the massive expense of building their own facilities and having to gain the approval of municipalities and the public to build gambling venues in their back yards. This agreement was not entered into lightly by the horse racing industry. After more than two years of economic review and negotiation, both the horse racing industry and the Ontario government’s Management Board of Cabinet agreed that a 20% share of the slots revenue could offset the loss of horse racing’s wagering dollar and customer base to sustain the horse racing industry. This revenue share would also help to offset the cost of operating and maintaining the buildings and properties in which the OLG’s government operated slots are housed.

For more than 10 years, the Slots at Racetracks Program has been a highly successful partnership which has allowed the horse racing industry to sustain itself and continue providing many economic benefits to the rural and municipal economies, while earning the provincial government more

than \$1.3 billion dollars in revenue every year.

Impact of the Horse Racing Industry by the numbers:

- \$261 million dollars in revenue for the province of Ontario exclusive of slot revenue
- Horse Racing Industry spends more than \$2 billion dollars per year in Ontario, with more than 80% of that money being spent in rural Ontario.
- Estimated 60,000 jobs are attributed to the horse racing and breeding industry.
- \$1.5 billion dollars in wages and salaries are sustained annually by the total expenditures of the horse racing industry.
- Where the OLG’s resort casinos have lost millions of dollars, the Slots at Racetracks Program has returned billions of dollars in revenue. “Talk about value for money!”

The OLG revenue sharing program has offset the negative financial impact slots at racetracks would otherwise have on the racing industry’s bottom line. The ever increasing competition imposed by the slots and other expanded gaming would further erode the wagering dollar to the point that the industry’s survival would be at serious risk. The government is looking to reduce the horse racing industry’s revenue share at a time when they are looking to expand their own gaming operations in direct competition with horse racing. In addition, if the proposed changes to the Criminal Code are implemented, the provinces will be allowed to operate sports betting, once again in direct competition with the horse racing industry.

Out of the more than 60,000 jobs that would be at risk, many of those employed have worked in the industry all their lives, some are even second and third generation racetrack workers who would be unlikely to find jobs in other industries.

By preserving the existing program, the government would continue to collect \$1.3 billion dollars annually from the race horse industry while ensuring Ontario’s horse racing industry remains economically sound for those rural communities and the 60,000 families that rely on the race horse industry for employment.

Look for OHRIA’s next Fact Sheet “Talk about value for money!”

For a list of MPP’s and more information contact OHRIA by phone at 416-679-0741 or by email at ohria@ohria.com.



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