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February 27, 2012

The Hon. Mr. Dwight Duncan,

**On the future of horse racing in Ontario**

I would like to take this opportunity to write to you respecting the future of horse racing in Ontario.

I have bred and raced horses in Ontario for over thirty years and currently own both harness and thoroughbred horses. I am also President of the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame and Chair of its planning committee although I do not address you today either formally or informally in those capacities.

What I would like to do in this letter is to set out one of the issues that I believe could get lost in your government's attempts to rein in the finances of the province.

Few would believe for a moment that your job is an easy one. Accordingly, I start from the position that you are acting in good faith and you believe that the course you are taking is in the best interests of Ontario and its future. I respect your position in government and understand that you must make tough and unpopular decisions especially in a time of persuasive calls for unprecedented austerity.

You have heard from the horse racing industry. I will not repeat its claims in any detail. The industry has argued that negative changes in the current revenue sharing agreement will cost the province of Ontario over \$1 billion dollars in lost GDP while jeopardizing 60,000 jobs in the province while harming the racetrack, breeding, training, pari-mutuel wagering and other offshoot components of the racing industries, its ownership interests and its professions across the province.

It is important that you, your political staff, and your public service financial analysts fully understand what these losses will mean for Ontario. Their opinions and their analysis will be important. I urge you to listen to them closely as they begin to understand the other sides of the current debate as well as the breadth and scope of the unintended consequences of the policy directions that the government has yet to think through in sufficient detail.

The horse racing industry has made the case that you and your staff have misapprehended the role of racing in Ontario and the financing arrangements that are now in place. I have heard your arguments and I have heard theirs.

They are right on this issue. You and the people who advise you in this instance are wrong. And you are especially wrong as it relates to the hurtful, false and ultimately preposterous advertising campaign that your party has chosen to undertake in the wake of the response from the horse racing industry.

It is important that the government go back to the drawing board and think through the issues again. And it is not just important for you in your role as a leader in government or for the racing industry. It is important for everyone living in the Province of Ontario as the policy directions that you have said that you wish to pursue are also wrong for the province as a whole.

### **On the future of race horses in Ontario**

Let me turn to one important concern that your government has not considered: what will happen to many of Ontario's horses. Let me explain.

In the late 1990's, the province of Ontario was struggling to implement a lasting model for the sustainability of legal gambling that included both pari-mutuel wagering and other forms of gambling. The present revenue sharing model is the result.

One of the most important achievements of that model was a boom in the breeding industry that allowed small absentee horse owners to own and race financially viable horses at many of the smaller tracks in Ontario. In the late 1990's, that was viewed as no small achievement by all concerned. Racing grew; tracks flourished. Ownership increased and the breeding industry prospered. This is exactly what we all set out to accomplish. We succeeded and we toasted our successes. We understood the operation of seventeen viable racetracks within the funding model to be a major success.

However, it took a long time for Ontario breeders and owners to step up to the plate. A breeding industry's successes are measured in equal shares of excellence, patience and time. The achievements of Ontario racing did not occur overnight.

And that is the main point. You cannot simply pull the plug on the revenue sharing agreement in Ontario without placing thousands of horses in jeopardy whose lower future purse earnings would make their financial upkeep no longer financially viable.

Regardless of the damage your decisions will do elsewhere, the true 'innocents' in this whole affair are the horses themselves. If the breeders, owners and trainers are no longer able to pay the bills at a point down the road, there will be insufficient numbers of farmers, dressage, hunting, road horse or other interests to absorb the thousands of horses who would lack racing venues and whose purse earnings would no longer be viable.

Mr. Duncan, it is almost impossible for me to find the words to relate to you what the results will be but the reality is that absent any changes in your intended directions, many thousands of horses would have to be disposed of in other ways.

It is one thing to adopt policies that would unnecessarily cripple an industry but it is absolutely inconceivable that any government would put policies in place that are so lacking in their basic humanity and sense of responsibility that they would place Ontario's horses in jeopardy.

In closing, you can be assured that the consequences of your government's actions on the ultimate disposition of Ontario's horses will be followed closely and made public with unprecedented vigilance. Accordingly, it is important that you take the time now to review your position on this matter and come to a more satisfactory set of solutions and outcomes.

Yours Truly



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## Appendix

### Text of Ontario Liberal Party Radio Ads

#### Radio Ad One:

"Did you know that Tim Hudak's PCs started a secret subsidy for a few, very wealthy racetrack owners? And now in these times of restraint, Tim Hudak says these rich payouts should be protected. He'd cancel full day kindergarten, leaving 50,000 four and five year olds stranded. Are we really going to spend more on horse racing than full day kindergarten? The PCs should do what's right. Tell Tim Hudak his priorities aren't your priorities."

#### Radio Ad Two:

"Did you know that Tim Hudak's PCs started a secret subsidy for a few, very wealthy racetrack owners? And now in these times of restraint, Tim Hudak says these rich payouts should be protected. But when it comes to our seniors, he voted against new supports to help them stay in their homes longer. Are we really going to protect horse racing over our parents and grandparents? The PCs should do what's right. Tell Tim Hudak his priorities aren't your priorities."