

Press Release

For Immediate Release
Campbellville, Ontario
Wednesday, February 15, 2012

“The horse racing industry is a self-sustaining industry. We have never taken a penny from the government. We subsidize the government, not the other way around.”

Ontario Harness Horse Association

In 1998 the horse racing industry negotiated an agreement charging the Ontario government a fee which allows them to locate and operate slot machines within Ontario horseracing facilities, in direct competition with our industry.

Here are some background facts according to the Ontario Racing Commission:

- Horse racing employs over 65,000 people, directly or indirectly, in Ontario.
- The province’s 17 supervised racetracks generate 67% of all wagering in Canada.
- The racing and breeding industries in Ontario generate \$2.6 billion of income annually into the provincial economy, making it the third largest agricultural industry in Canada.

Just last year - 2011, racetrack slots generated approximately \$1.7 billion. From that revenue the Ontario government paid roughly \$355 million in operating costs. It also paid approximately \$345 million to the horse racing industry to cover its negotiated fee. That means that last year alone, the government of Ontario cleared over \$1 billion from revenue generated at racetracks across the province, without investing a penny in the industry.

According to recent statements by Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, the government plans to renege on the signed agreement with the horse racing industry which will have a devastating impact on those who rely on horse racing for their livelihood. We are at risk of losing our industry, our jobs and our sole source of income if the McGuinty Liberal Government follows through on this threat. Many of us will have to either leave the province or end up on social assistance. It happened in Quebec four years ago and it is about to happen here in Ontario.

We are an industry that has always survived on its own and never received a penny from the government. We breed and race horses we raised or bought at auctions. We get our income from pari-mutuel wagering. Many of us are self-employed and therefore cannot collect unemployment benefits. The only option is welfare. If the Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, thinks taxpayers are subsidizing us now, wait until thousands of us are unemployed. Given the present state of the economy, the last thing the people of Ontario need is a greater burden on their already stretched tax dollars. We believe this proposal is shortsighted, destructive, and vindictive and will destroy rural Ontario and its precious agricultural industry.

We are asking all Ontarians to join us in saving a way of life as well as the livelihoods of thousands of men and women who rely on horse racing for survival. Efforts to organize a rally at Queen's Park (tentative for Wednesday, February 22, 2012) are well underway and a follow-up Press Release will announce the date and time as soon as they have been confirmed.

For further information please contact:

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